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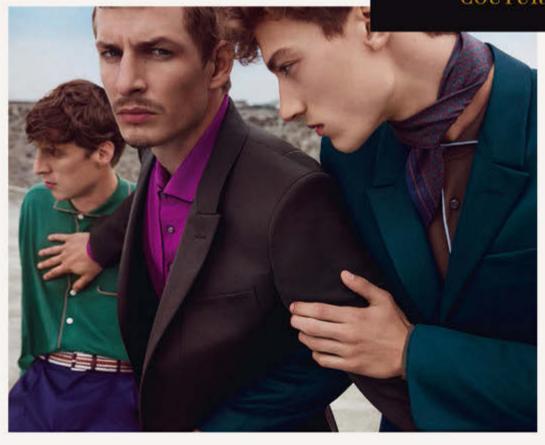








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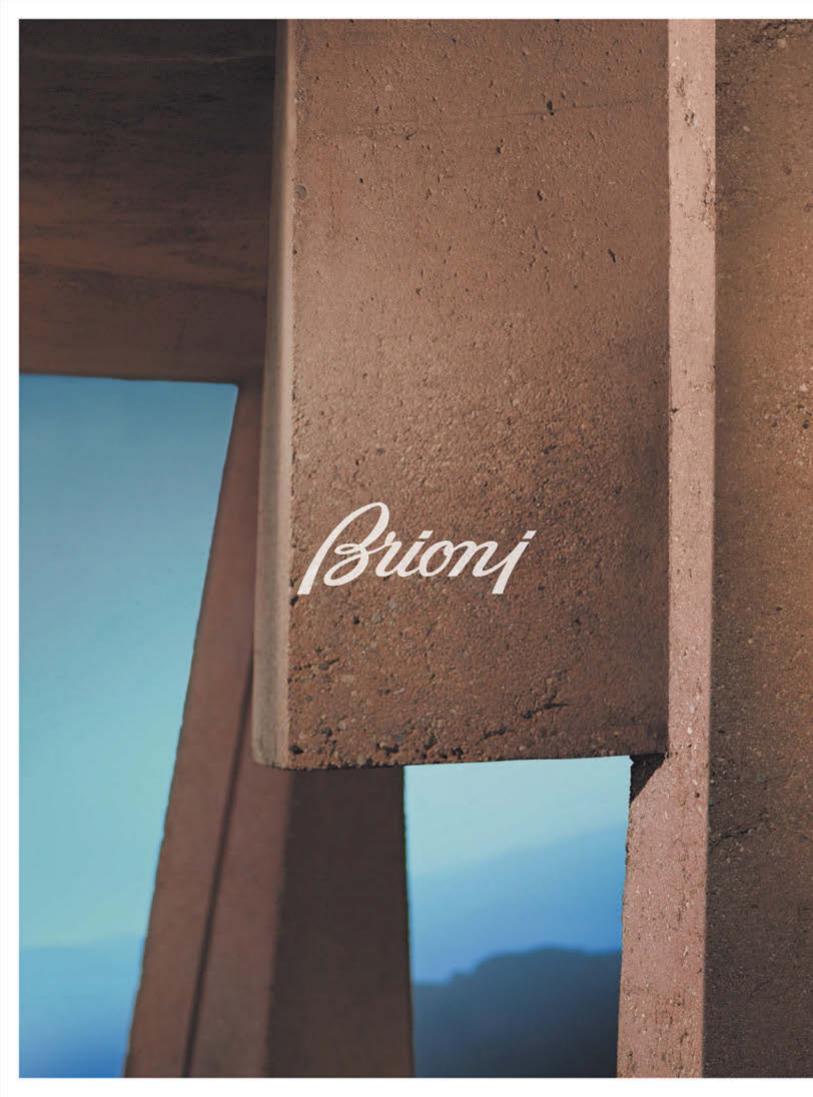


















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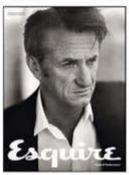
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SEAN PENI

PHOTOGRAPHS Tom Craig SEAN PENN WEARS Newsstand and subscriber editions: Black wool suit; white cotton shirt, both by Giorgio Armani.





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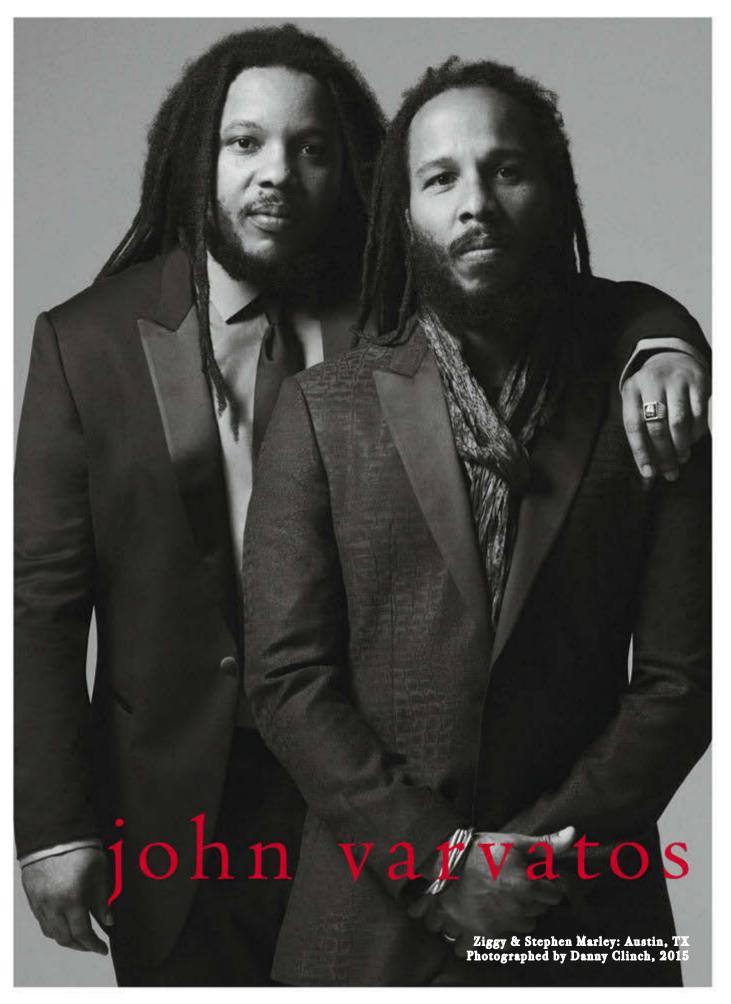
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ALEX BILMES EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

So, here is the quick way of working out if you're a feminist. Put your hand in your pants.
a) Do you have a vagina? And,
b) Do you want to be in charge of it?
If you said "yes" to both, then congratulations!
You're a feminist.

— Caitlin Moran, *How to be a Woman* 

fyou, like me, are not a woman, you'll have answered "no" to question a).
For that reason you'll have to put "N/A" beside question b). Because you're unlikely to want to be in charge of your vagina if you don't have one. All of which might lead you to the conclusion that you are not, ergo, a feminist. But that would be incorrect. Caitlin Moran doesn't say you can't be a feminist if you don't have a vagina. All she's saying is that it is axiomatic that those who have a vagina, and want to be in charge of it, are feminists. In other words, all women are feminists even if they don't know it, which some don't, or if they actively deny it, which some do.

And what about us men? Well, to use a romcom cliché, it's complicated. Too complicated, more's the pity, to unravel simply by sticking your hands down your pants. Although be my guest, obviously, as and when the mood takes you.

You'll have noticed that feminism, which might have seemed to some of us to have gone quiet though the "ladette" years, has lately returned to the centre of cultural, social and political debate. Turns out the phrase "post-feminist" was somewhat previous. Anyone tempted to think the fight ended in the Eighties has been reminded, by Moran and the Everyday Sexism Project and the contributors to jezebel.com and the many other powerful voices that make up new feminism — fourth-wave feminism, it's sometimes called — that there is still some way to go before victory can be declared.

Women, women you know and love as well as women you've never met, suffer discrimination at work, at home and on the street. New feminism is gaining in momentum not only because its cause is just but because it appeals well beyond a small core of activists. It appeals to women who may have felt alienated by earlier strains — particularly the more virulent, anti-men radicalism of some Seventies and Eighties feminism — and it might appeal to you, too.

In September of last year, at the UN in New York, the actor Emma Watson (Hermione from the Harry Potter films) launched a campaign called HeForShe, "a solidarity movement for gender equality that brings together one half of humanity in support of the other half of humanity, for the benefit of all." To paraphrase the late gay activist Harvey Milk — immortalised on screen by our cover star Sean Penn — new feminism wants to recruit you.

If you support the aims of HeForShe, are you a feminist? And would you be happy to describe yourself as such? I think this is trickier for men, even bien pensant men, than some think. I believe in the desirability of gender equality — full equality, 50:50 — all down the line. Equality at work, equality in the

home, equality in the street, equal pay, equal opportunity, equal representation, equal rights.

I have a daughter and a son and I expect and indeed demand the same for her as for him. I don't believe she should have to do more or less than him to get ahead in any area of her life. I don't think she should cook more (or less), clean more (or less), go shopping more (or less) change more (or less) nappies. And I don't think he should go to the pub more (or less), take the wheel more (or less), pay for dinner more (or less). I don't think either of them should be judged on their looks or their clothes, although I know they both will be.

If that's all feminism is, then I'm a feminist. But that's not all it is, is it?

Because, to give just one example — an obvious one that has got me into trouble before — I also think it's OK to publish photographs of scantily clad starlets in this magazine, and occasionally we do. And there are feminists, whose opinions I respect but disagree with, who think that it's not OK for us to do that, because it objectifies women, which is wrong. (These waters are muddled by the fact that the scantily clad starlets regard themselves as feminists, and they are always in control of the way they are presented in the magazine.)

Still, for this reason apart from any other, I feel a fraud saying I'm a feminist. And I'm sure many feminists will be pleased to hear that.

Last year, one of Caitlin Moran's colleagues at *The Times*, Deborah Ross, offered what I think is a smart paragraph on this topic:

"A man can be a feminist sympathiser, certainly. A man can recognize, as many men do, that gender equality benefits everyone in the long run, but a feminist? A non-Jew can be against anti-Semitism, but Jewish? To be a feminist don't you have to know what it is like to be a woman, every day? What it is like to be groped on the tube? What it is like to be paid less than a man for doing the same job?"

Yes, I think probably you do. But then Ross does some water-muddying of her own:

"What it is like to be the one half of a couple who has to race home from work if a child is sick?"

Well, there are certainly men at Esquire — me for one — who have had to do that. If that's a hurdle to being a feminist I think we can say we've cleared it.

"What it is like to wear the wrong accessories, be subject to scorn and plunge down a sink hole that wasn't there before."

Darling, if only you knew! Seriously, if it's about pressures to conform to an unrealistic aesthetic ideal, then while we are still way, way behind women, men do feel pressure to look and dress a certain way or be ridiculed. As I say, it's complicated.

Enter Esquire's Andrew Harrison to try to cut through all the jargon and the clutter and the claim and counter-claim to ask, quite simply, how best we men can be feminists, if we can be feminists at all?

I think Andrew has come up with solid definitions and sound advice. Whether or not you have a vagina, you may agree or disagree with him, or with me. In any case, let us know. It's one of the key issues of the age, and quite rightly it's not going away.



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### ANDREW O'HAGAN

"Even when you write every day," says O'Hagan, "there are certain topics you're not ready to tackle head-on." Our editor-at-large has waited a long time to write about his late father's alcoholism and does so for this month's issue. O'Hagan's new novel also examines family relationships, and Esquire editor-in-chief Alex Bilmes interviews him about it on page 164. "Some editors care about the writing game," says O'Hagan, "and you want that guy in your corner." The Illuminations (Faber & Faber) is out on 5 February.



### **OLIE ARNOLD**

Stylist Arnold was tasked with picking the clothes for this issue's definitive fashion edit. "The story's narrative — a lost lad wandering the streets of LA — was a gentle nod to the oddness of photographer Philip-Lorca DiCorcia and director David Lynch," says Arnold. "This felt a little too true to life when, on day two, we drove past a fatal shooting in a parking lot and the police draping the sheet over a body." London-based Arnold recently launched Conversation Style, a digital menswear project with creative agency Show Media.



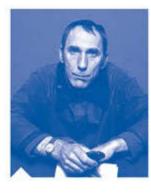
### ANDREW HARRISON

Can men be feminists? Do we want to be? "You'd think so," argues Harrison, who looks at how men fit into the gender equality debate. "Underneath all the recrimination, feminism is about fairness," he says. "But given that an unfair world is working out fine for many of us, feminism is going to have to explain why men will have to give up a little to gain a lot. It won't be easy." An ex-editor of Q and Mixmag, Harrison writes for The Guardian and The New Statesman.



### **AA GILL**

When not striking fear into the hearts of restaurateurs. the notorious critic directs his attentions at Esquire readers — you lucky things. Moonlighting as Uncle Dysfunctional, he's here to guide you through the murky waters of life, love, sex and personal style with his own prescription of caustic wit and tough love. "The point of advice," he says, "is to find out what people want and make sure they get it - good and hard." A writer for Vanity Fair and The Sunday Times, teetotal Gill is working on a memoir of his drinking years.



### **WILL SELF**

"He's still alive!' That's the headline news about Will Self this issue," says our editor-atlarge, who on page 190 writes about his ambivalence towards those lists of 99 things to do before you die. "Despite inadvertently completing my bucket list, I stubbornly continue to breathe and have a pulse," Self adds. "This year, I'm intending to celebrate my yet-beating heart by living for a week on the new total food substitute, Soylent. Look out for the future issue in which I write about this smoothie topic." Self's latest novel, Shark (Viking), is out now.



### **TOM CRAIG**

"We shot Sean Penn in Brigitte Bardot's old apartment in Paris," says Esquire's contributing photographer. "He's known as being stone-cold cool, and arrived with no stylist, no hairdresser, no make-up, no entourage and said, 'Hi, I'm Sean', lit a cigarette and we got on with it. We chatted about the Sudan, Sierra Leone and the Congo, then he went back to [girlfriend] Charlize [Theron]. As André 3000 sings, 'What's cooler than being cool? Ice cold!" Craig's work also appears in US Vogue and Vanity Fair.



### **MATTHEW HAMBLY**

After 30 years with only a passing knowledge of the sport, Hambly finally decided to become a football fan. But which team to back? "It's odd finding a group of passionate supporters in your own back yard," he says. "But I've learned it's not that people love football, but that they love having a reason to meet, socialise and eat pasta bake. Oh, and that Arsenal fans are a grumpy bunch." Hambly was formerly men's editor of asos.com and deputy editor of Esquire Weekly.



### **NEIL GAVIN**

The Irish photographer produced our "epic" 30-page story of this year's spring/summer collections. "I was shooting in LA with the dream team," says Gavin. "It took us to every possible part of the city — all we did was shoot and drive with very little food and sleep in between. And our model did get some funny looks walking into the ocean at Venice Beach with a surfboard and wearing a cravat." Based between London and New York, Gavin's work has appeared in Vogue, Vanity Fair and The Big Black Book.







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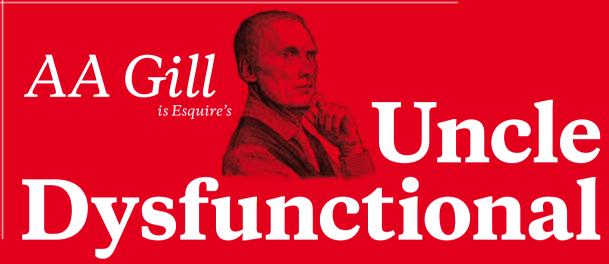


## Modern Essentials selected by DAVID BECKHAM





### VERSACE



Want to opt out of fashion? Finding it all too stressful to keep abreast of contemporary style? Get over yourself. Esquire's sartorially perfect psychoanalyst has no sympathy with your plight, but instead lays down the rules of what you must own and how to wear it properly

### Dear Uncle Dysfunctional,

I like clothes, I like to look nice. I've a favourite jacket and a jumper I'm sentimental about, but they're just clothes. You know what I mean? In the end, they're only the wrapping the important stuff comes in. I don't want to spend a fortune on them. In fact, I don't want to spend anything. Buying shirts is so far down my bucket list of things to spend cash on, it doesn't register. I look smart, clean and comfortable. I'm cool in summer and warm in winter.

The thing is, my dad complains that I don't have the right clothes to visit my grandma or go to my cousin's wedding. And he had a fit when he saw me going for a job interview in the clothes that I wear to do everything else. I said that they only wanted me to talk on the phone, not to look like James Bond, but he wasn't having it. Why do you lot — old people — all insist on having a dressing-up box to do different shit in? A suit for drinking tea. A tie to meet a bank manager. It's weird. And while we're at it, what's with all the clothes in this magazine? Are there really blokes who look at the pages of stuff and think, "Ooh, I must spend my Saturday searching for just the right mid-length spring scarf in this season's must-have maroon"?

Dylan, via email

### Dear Dylan,

Yes, there are. But let's step away from the absurdity of contemporary fashion, to strip your question down to its boxer shorts. When I was probably about your age, my dad — who actually thought very like you, hated wearing a tie and would have liked to have worn corduroy

wherever possible all his life, and would much rather be warm than stylish - went to China, then still a closed communist country under Mao Zedong, coming to the end of the Cultural Revolution. He brought me back a Mao suit blue cotton, a baggy safari jacket with four flat pockets, a ghillie collar, single-breasted and chino trousers with a matching cap. It was the collective uniform of a billion Chinese of both sexes. It came in either blue for everyone or green for the military. And the answer to your question is yes, it was practical, cheap and it made everyone look the same on the outside and spared them the bourgeois worries of fashion, style, avarice and jealousy; they were never underdressed, always appropriate, it was a reminder that everyone is equal, and that what was important is what they did, said and thought.

I wore mine once, and cut quite a dash in Notting Hill Gate in the mid-Seventies. I looked like I was going to a fancy dress party, or playing in a movie. People pointed and laughed, and

My dad hated wearing a tie and would have worn corduroy wherever possible all his life



asked where I got it. Exactly the opposite of what Mao had wanted. It wasn't an expression of unity, but singularity, a statement of otherness. I never wore it again, choosing to look different in the same way as everyone else. But it was an irony with a lesson in the power of what you dismissively call fashion and I pretentiously call aesthetics. Personal adornment is the only cultural form that everybody in the world takes part in.

Even if you take the Clarkson line that if it covers your genitals, it's fine, that's a statement. Indeed, Jeremy opting out of fashion has made his look as recognisable and in-your-face as Grayson Perry's. You don't have a choice about fashion or aesthetics - you're in it, whether you like it or not. So you then have to decide, do you want to be good or naff at it? The truth about Mao's suits was that they didn't relieve you of the insecurity and vanity of surface things, calibrate the intellect and the character, they demanded that everyone had the same character and thought the same pocket platitudes. Removing variety in dress doesn't uncover variety of personality. The biggest, most avaricious, style-conscious fashion victims in the world are now the Chinese. So don't assume that you alone can rise above fashion. It really isn't a good look.

And as for the tiresomeness of having to dress differently for different situations, just get over it. You wouldn't like it if your mother had turned up at your graduation in her wedding dress, explaining that it had cost her so much she thought she should get it out more often, and if it was alright for one then why not for all special occasions? Of all the myriad and voluminous ways that a parent can embarrass their children, dress is the easiest and the most cripplingly effective. There are a very limited number of potential occasions where you should have the appropriate clothes:

→ Obviously, you need a black tie: every man at some point in his life will have to wear black tie and, when choosing a suit, think, "Could my father or my grandfather wear this?" And if the answer is no, then you shouldn't either: black tie should be ageless. And learn to tie a bow - it's not difficult and there's no excuse for either a clip-on or the hideous Hollywood straight tie. You do, though, need a straight black tie for funerals. Everyone has to go to a funeral at some time and you need to be dark and sombre, and in a black tie. Wearing a football scarf because he'd have appreciated it, or a Hawaiian shirt because he loved a laugh is not the point. Funerals are about respect for the bereaved, not a punch line for the dead.

## Your dressing gown should be attractive enough for a date to wear the next day without laughing

- You need something smart that isn't a suit.
  That probably means a blazer, the most versatile piece of clothing ever invented.
- → And you need a white shirt not expensive, not fancy, just ironed. A white shirt is the ultimate result dress, the most seductive thing a man can wear. It's our equivalent of high heels and stockings. Every message a white shirt gives out is positive. It's unflashy but romantic.
- → Advice to men about dressing tends to be formal but every man needs to have a good fancy dress. The rules are "wit rather than guffaws", "amusing is better than hilarious" laughing with you, not at you. And nothing that's made out of polyester: you become a sweaty static-magnet. Nothing with a carnival head. And nothing you couldn't hail a taxi in at four in the morning.
- → And a dressing gown, every man needs a good dressing gown. Not necessarily like Noël Coward but something that doesn't look like a DNA encyclopedia or evidence from a crime scene. Nothing above the knee, and nothing with dragons, eagles or Chinese writing on it. Oh, and not plucked from the Bangkok Four Seasons or a health club. It should be attractive enough for a date to wear it the next morning without gagging, laughing or regretting.
- → Remember that clothes can never make you something you're not: they don't fool anyone but they do let people know who you think you are. Nature gave you your look and there's only a limited amount you can do about that, but what you wear is the skin you choose for yourself. More importantly than what it tells others, it reminds you of who you can be.









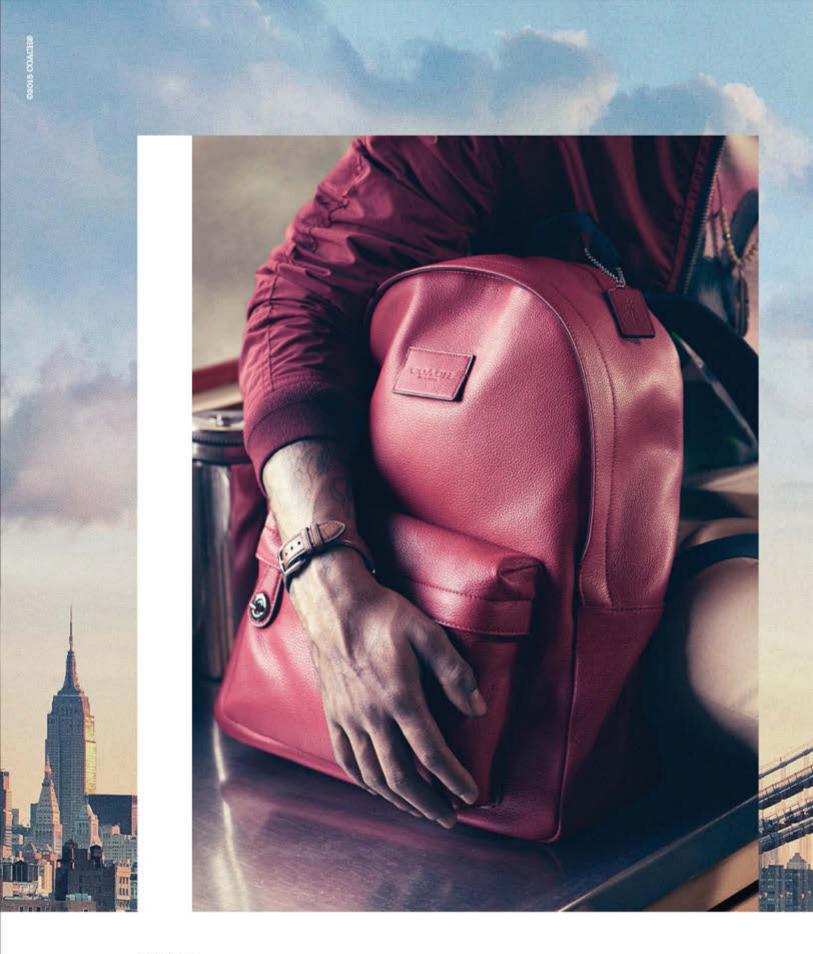


the original
-button up-



#buttonup





Coach Drumers

Kid Cudi/Recording Artist and Actor Campus Backpack in red Nylon Aviator in red coach.com









Heritage Black Bay is the direct descendant of Tudor's technical success in Greenland on the wrists of Royal Navy sailors. 60 years later, the Black Bay is ready to stand as its own legend.

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# BAGS OF CHOICE

YOU ONLY NEED FOUR BAGS SO HERE ARE 12 TO CHOOSE FROM

FASHION / GROOMING / TECH / FOOD / CARS Edited by Teo van den Broeke

Esquire

Expose-stitched, vegetable-tanned leather satchel? Works in a vegan cafe. Leather backpack? Definitely does something in fashion. Bumbag? Probably a serial killer. Ultimately, you

## THE

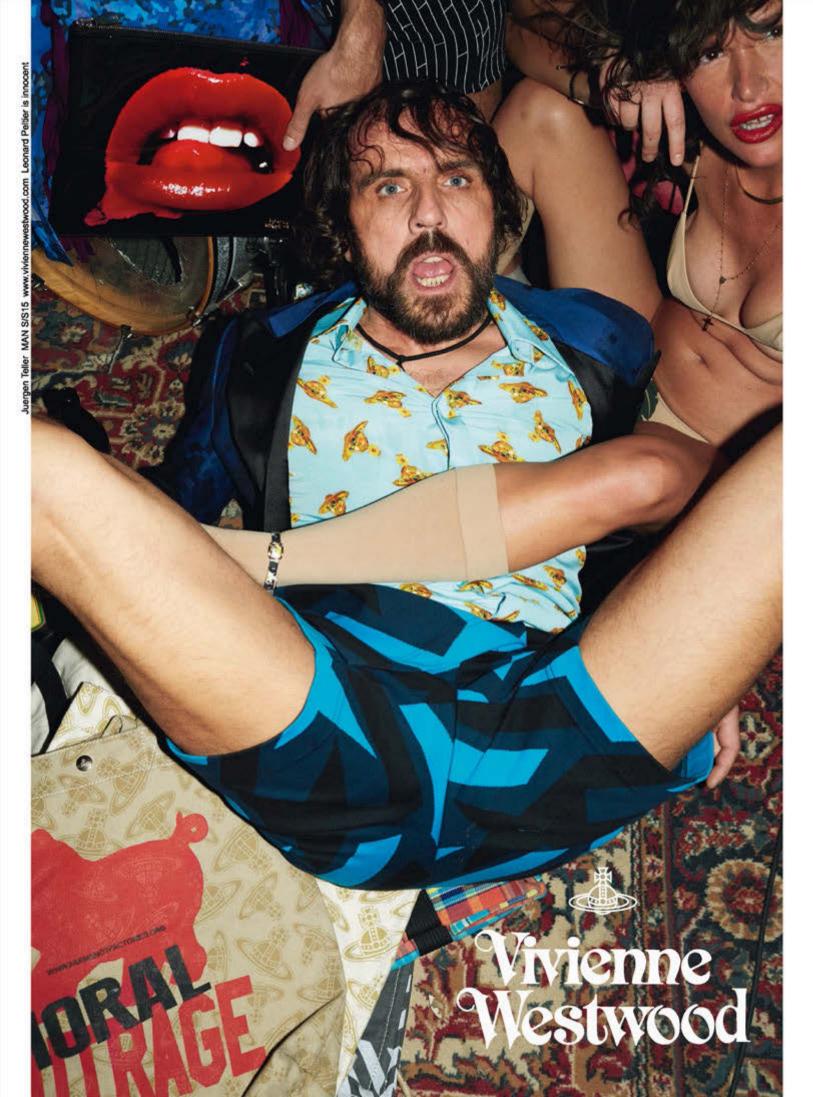
It's big and roomy but there's no reason for your holdall to be indecorous or unwieldy. This season's best styles are cut from rich grain leather.

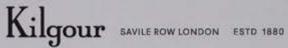
Black leather holdall, £40, by Topman

Blue leather holdall, £595, by Hackett

Grey leather holdall, £580, by Boss

















THE STYLE COLUMN

## JEREMY Langmead

HERE COMES THE SUN (HOPEFULLY)

It's really chilly and yet I'm about to tell you about the new trends for spring/summer. It seems wrong, somehow; the thought of thinking about, let alone wearing, a shortsleeved floral shirt this week is utterly unappetising. It's like ordering a pina colada while wearing a Woolrich parka. But this is the fashion world and logic has no place here. And, as I've advised before, being forewarned is forearmed (or bare-armed): in a month or two, you will be grateful that you know what's around the sartorial corner. You may even snap up some of these trends early and be ahead of the curve in your social group. It may sound a trifle petty, but you have to admit there is a certain amount of smug joy to be had when your friends point out that you were wearing something long before the rest of them. Or am I the only saddo who enjoys that feeling? Whatevs.

There are no great surprises this spring. The designers fortunately didn't suddenly decide we should all be wearing mini-crinis, suits of armour or fascinators; and neither did they turn to the dystopia of *Hunger Games: Mockingjay* for inspiration. In fact, you will probably be relieved to know that the usual, but welcome, suspects are back on a rail near you:

50 shades of blue, rather than grey, are there for your delectation this spring. And this can only be good news for myriad reasons: blue is fresh, slimming, easy to wear and goes with everything. Hoorah.

There's lots and lots of denim around. And it's looking very workwear: more chain-gang than chi-chi this spring. For the loftier among you, there is also a plethora of loose cut, longer fit, soft denim jackets — the look more artist's studio than recording studio. Give them a try.



Another easy win is the penny

loafer. The loafer is a spring classic, worn with or without socks, and goes with almost anything: formal trousers, beach shorts, the lot. The only thing it tends to clash with is a rotund ankle. Sorry, but it's best to be honest.

Florals. Again. I know, can't they think of something new on the pattern front? But, to be fair, florals only made a comeback about two summers ago and they've been an enormous retail success: after all, they are relatively cheery to behold, and not as "poofy" to wear as you might imagine. You can either go for fluttering florals on your linen shirts, or a hardcore floral (wooh! scary!) on your Givenchy sportswear.

Back, too, is the printed T-shirt.

Another popular summer number...
although I'm not convinced to be
honest. That might just be because I'm
not young and skinny enough to get
away with one; or it might be because
a plain white or navy T-shirt from
J Crew is hard to beat. I just can't
imagine James Dean or Marlon Brando
looking quite so good if they'd
swapped their white T-shirts for
a geometric print one by Raf Simons.

There are some newer trends joining this list, too. Although the more eagle-eyed of you will have noted them once or twice before.

Baggy trousers, as previously reported, continue to flap back into fashion. Pleats abound at the waist, fabric fuller on the hips, but the cut still tending to slim down when it nears the ankle.

Performance wear. I'm not sure when or why performance wear

KING OF THE SWINGERS: Yves Saint Laurent demonstrates the power of jungle-inspired safari jackets in London, 1969

HEAT SQUAD: Dior's colourful take on the denim jacket; Paul Smith goes floral; Prada's sports sandal kidnapped sportswear. I suppose sportswear, particularly on the continent, means expensive casualwear rather than shell suits; and performance fabrics aren't necessarily used for sports games only. But sports-inspired casualwear is still in fashion. And with good reason: it looks and feels good, and serves a purpose. Which is kind of what clothes are supposed to do, really.

The "sports sandal" is a less welcome addition to the performance/sportswear family. Basically, a strappy sandal with a sneaker-style sole.
Since sandals are for vacations and weekends, I'm not sure why you'd need a pair you can run in. But designers think otherwise... perhaps they want to help you to get to the front of the queue for an ice cream.

Finally, and I think I'm coming round to this one, there's the safari jacket. These have been lingering on the fringes of fashion for a while now and quite clearly refuse to give up. Obviously, the first thing that springs to mind is either I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here (or, perhaps, Out of This), or Roger Moore's debonair but dated Mr Bond. But, to be fair, I think it has found its way in 2015. The modern-day safari jacket no longer has flapping collars and a clunky waist; nor does it come in unattractive shades of sand. The new versions are slim-cut, in more technical-look fabrics and colours, and look good with dark jeans over a T-shirt rather than with matching trousers and a cravat. I may try one this spring. But for now, it's a cup of cocoa and a onesie for me. Brrrr! 18



## Russell&Bromley



The 'Redwood W' woven oxford www.russellandbromley.co.uk



shop tommy.com





## PERSONALISE YOUR THRILL WITH THE NEW NISSAN JUKE

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Olympic Medallist Jenny Jones



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## Learn to cook

Novelist Thomas Wolfe said, "There is no spectacle on Earth more appealing than that of a beautiful woman in the act of cooking dinner for someone she loves." It's a sentiment which works both ways. Cook an amazing meal for a beautiful woman and she'll be pastry in your hands. The route to becoming a master chef is threepronged: first you need to get the basics down pat at a cookery school; next, get the right tools; and finally you need good recipes.



3







"Head to Raymond Blanc's Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons if you're a more accomplished cook," says Michelinstarred chef Jason Atherton. "This is a great course to go on. The chef has set dishes that are a lot more high-end restaurant cooking. You'll learn a lot of tricks." belmond.com

The cookery book



Esquire's food editor
Tom Parker Bowles' new
book is bursting with
achievable yet impressive
recipes, from gratin of
chicory and bacon to
arancini di riso, all of
which will give your new
knife (not to mention
skill set) a test run.
Let's Eat Meat (Pavilion)
by Tom Parker Bowles, £17,
amazon.co.uk

Kitchen knives Recommended by top chefs

## 1. VICTORINOX TOMATO



Florence Knight, Polpetto "It's one of the most useful knives in the kitchen. Small, inexpensive but very sharp and agile." £6, victorinox.com

## 2. NENOX GYUTO



Brad McDonald,
The Lockhart
"If I could only have
one knife in my
kitchen, it would be
this. It's comfortable
to use and adaptable
to many tasks — from
mincing chives to
slicing meat."
E1,100, korin.com

## 3. SABATIER CHEF'S



Fergus Henderson, St John
"The knife is hand-friendly and sharpens excellently; very important. It's seen me through many years in the kitchen and now charms me at home." £58, amazon.co.uk

## 4. FLINT 8 FLAME CHEF'S



Mark Hix, Hix Soho
"Flint & Flame are
relatively new to the
UK. With great weight
and looks, these
exquisite German steel
tools perform to a very
high standard, hold
and take an edge
perfectly and should
last a lifetime." £115,
flintandflame.co.uk

## 5. VICTORINOX 8IN CHEF'S



Jason Atherton,
Pollen Street Social
"The best knife with
a wooden handle.
It's indestructible!
An all-purpose knife
which is forever sharp
and not too costly.
The most reliable knife
on the market."
E121, victorinox.com



Get a proper bed

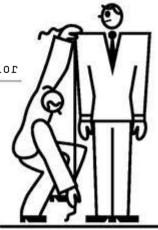


On average, you'll spend 2,920 hours in bed a year. That's 122 days. So, it's worth thinking about your slumber set-up. Swedish sleep experts Hästens has been making beds since 1852 and claims its 2000T model "will make you wonder how it's possible to feel so amazingly well rested". Each spring moves independently stopping sagging and the mattress comprises layers of cotton, wool and horsehair. 2000T Kingsize Bed, £12,760, hastens.com



Talk to a tailor

When buying clothes, it doesn't matter if the fit isn't perfect. Take your new trousers, jacket or shirt to an affordable, established tailor. He'll recognise what you need and recut your clothes to your shape. Mike Mandalia on central London's South Molton Street can sometimes turn jobs round in a day. mtailors.co.uk



White cotton



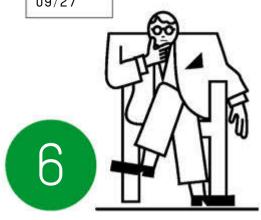
Buy a tracksuit (but be sure to read this first)

For Spring/Summer 2015, tailoring has taken a slouchy turn. It's something we've banged on about for a while, but the days of trussed up two-pieces are truly over (until next season, at least). Designers from Bottega Veneta to Ermenegildo Zegna are offering tracksuit trousers in sumptuous fabrics combined with equally elegant cardigan-style jackets this season. Nowhere is this softly-softly approach more prevalent than at . Savile Row tailor Kilgour, where dynamo creative director Carlo Brandelli has recently been reinstalled. His academic approach to tailoring is epitomised in this single-breasted suit. Cut from the finest Italian wool jersey, the suit is designed to fit as comfortably as a tracksuit, while maintaining all the sartorial prowess of

Kilgour's best.



STYLE LIVING 09/27

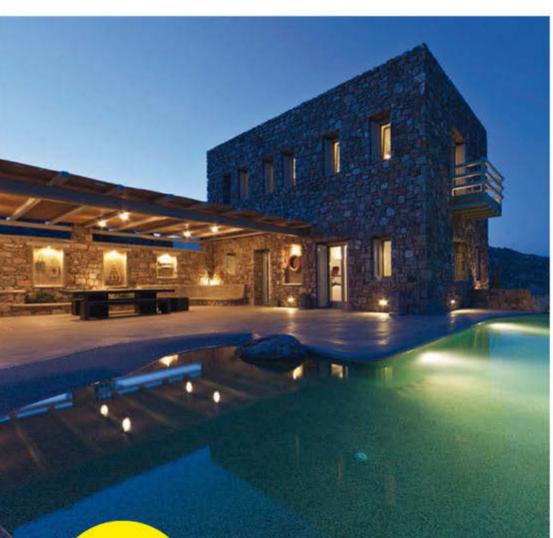


## Get therapy...

Winter blues? Talking to someone will definitely help. Whether a one-off session with a therapist or a targeted "Life MOT" series, The School of Life is the place to go. Start with a 75-minute introductory appointment, involving a session with a life coach, who will assess your goals and formulate a programme of sessions to help you achieve them. The School of Life, £150 for an introductory session, theschooloflife.com



"Having the correct dentist makes all the difference to your smile," says Dr Tim Bradstock-Smith of The London Smile Clinic. "People ignore the serious complications of their teeth and have swift cover-up work to temporarily rid problems. A good dentist can save you money in the long-run and result in better teeth. You can be unaware any problems exist because you can't see them. The right dentist will identify these early and advise on the best treatment." londonsmileclinic.co.uk







Greek idyll: the Rocky Retreats 2 10-guest villa is sited above Agrari Beach on sun-baked Mykonos island



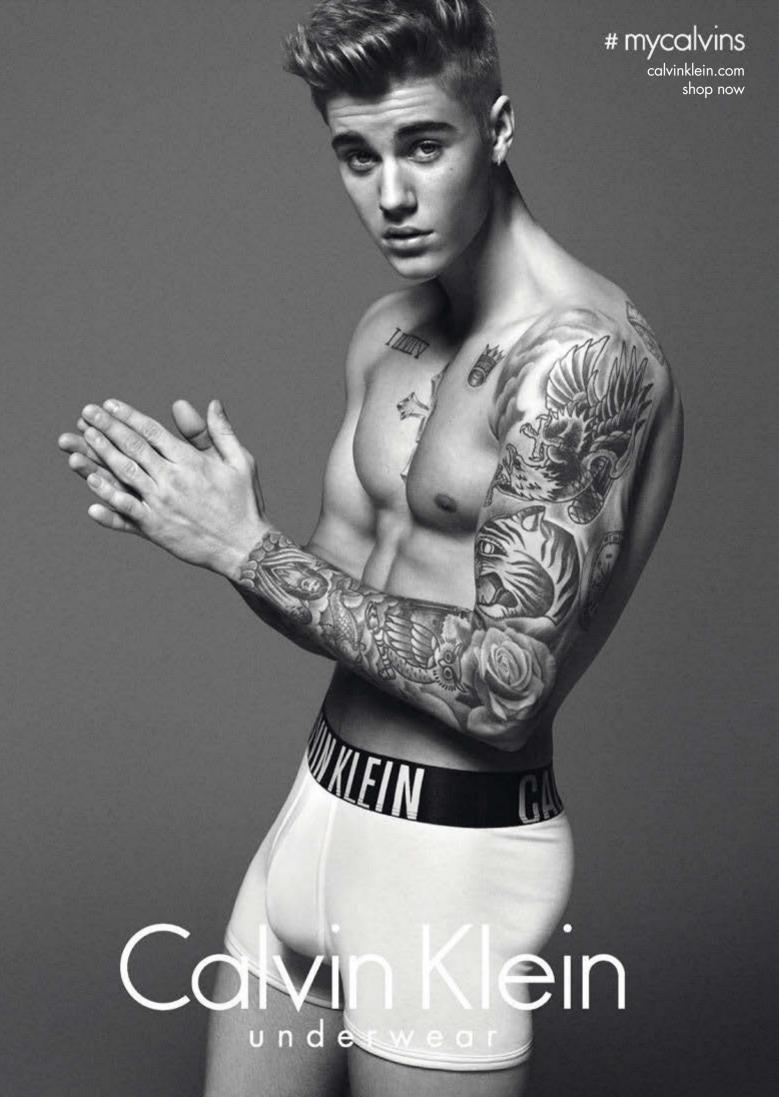
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Rent a super-villa

The best holidays are the ones spent doing stupid things with loads of friends in a house where no one can hear you scream (into the karaoke machine). This month, take 10 mates to hole up in one of the best party villas this side of The Black Sea. Rocky Retreats is our pick in Greece. Overlooking the Aegean Sea and boasting one of the most impressive views on the island of Mykonos, it's a short stroll down to the beach while Mykonos town is a quick drive away (Victor, the property's concierge, will happily ferry you there). You likely won't want to leave,

though, given that the house comes with an enormous BBQ, an outdoor bar, a separate dance room-cum-guest room (thankfully for any sleeping guests it's located away from the main house), an infinity pool and, as mentioned, a concierge. The best time to head there is September or October when it starts to cool down and all the Antipodean travellers (who, despite being charming, will drink you under the table) have moved on. Rocky Retreats 2 (sleeps ten) from €900 (£700) per night,

rockymansion.com





Book a last-minute skiing holiday\*

Having something exciting to work towards is a great stress-buster, especially if that thing is a week of skiing, drinking good wine and eating dinners with a higher cheese content than should be legally allowed. Everyone has their favourite ski resort, out a little and discovering new pistes, so as we come to the end of the season (when trips tend to tail off in price), Esquire's travel expert Tom Barber chooses three alternatives.

San Cassiano



This charming little resort is the soul of Italy's Dolomites range, which tend to be under most British skiers' radar. Stay at the immaculate Rosa Alpina to ski the extensive Dolomiti Superski. rosalpina.it.

Val Thorens



The highest resort in Europe — so good powder conditions are virtually guaranteed — with a thankfully low oligarch count and a crackingly good contemporary hotel, Altapura, to stay in. en.altapura.fr

Åre



A Swedish ski resort with Europe's most North American resort vibe. Full of blonde beauties and activities from dog-sledding to oversized hot tubs. The Copper Hill Lodge is supremely slick as well. are-sweden.com



As you book your trip to the slopes, also consider some new gear, specifically Armani. Its newest winter collection is handsome and understated, featuring technical accoutrements, including the highest-level waterproofing, thermally bonded zips and micro-fleece interiors. The outerwear is considerately designed, with generous pockets and adjusters positioned just where you need them, while thermal layers are simple, comfortable and effective. Accessories include technical gloves, bandanas, cashmerelined hats, and there's even an Armani snowboard. Ultimately, the EA7 Collection looks as good as you'd expect it to, but outperforms your preconceptions. We'll see you on the hill.



# RIVER ISLAND

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## 1 | MISSION AERO WIRELESS MUSIC SYSTEM

Spacious, "3D" sound via cutting-edge speakers. Stream anything from smartphone to laptop. £500, mission.co.uk

## 2 | WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 220 SPEAKERS

Named "the best budget speakers on the market" for good reason. Great bass. £200, wharfedale.

## 3 QUAD VENA

connect wirelessly via Bluetooth or digital inputs (there's enough for everything). Delivers tons of power. £600, quad-hifi.co.uk

## 4 | REGA RP1

Light, resin platter with carbon cartridge and manual tone arm. Minimalist design, and excellent value for money. £230, rega.co.uk

Total: £1,530



## Join a private sports club

Whether you work out every day or just once a month, consider a membership at a private sports club. How often is the pool too busy at your local gym? How many times have the courts been booked? How regularly must you squeeze between two sweating blokes in the sauna? Join a good club and you'll have easy access to excellent facilities and more than likely a regular table at a damn good restaurant as well. Here are three of the best:



## **BATH & RACQUETS**

One of Richard Caring's range of members' clubs. Bath & Racquets features a two-tiered gym, where state of the art equipment sits comfortably alongside antique floor rugs and wood-panelled walls. The focus is on exercise - there's a "vast army" of squash coaches - but comfort and relaxation are big too, so there's a barber and masseuse, and a bar in the changing rooms. Bath & Racquets Club, 49 Brooks Mews, London W1K bathandracquetsclub.co.uk



## **LANSDOWNE**

Nestled in the heart of Mayfair the Lansdowne opened in 1935, originally intended to be a "social. residential and athletic club for members of social standing" Facilities include cardio, free weights and resistance gyms, three squash courts, swimming pool, three physio treatment rooms and a fencing hall. The latter, of course, won us over. The Lansdowne Club. 9 Fitzmaurice Place. London W1.7 lansdowneclub.com



## **HURLINGHAM**

Famous for one sport in particular, the club is set in 42 leafy acres on the edge of Fulham, London, and is as typically English as you can get. Aside from the polo. facilities include indoor and outdoor pools, grass tennis courts, cricket squares and even a Four in Hand yard. If you have no idea what that is. you probably shouldn't apply for membership. Hurlingham Club, Ranelagh Gardens, London SW6 hurlinghamclub.org.uk



Rent an artwork

It's now possible to borrow art. Rise Art lets you choose from original contemporary artworks, photos and prints by artists including Tracey Emin, Gavin Turk and Damien Hirst. It costs from £25 a month to try out artworks in your home. Should a piece sit particularly well, all the art is available to buy, with a percentage of rental fees going towards the payment. *riseart.com* 





## THE FUTURE, BUILT ON THE PAST.



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THE NEW GIULIETTA Sprint

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Model shown is the Giulietta 1.4 MultiAir 150 bhp Sprint at £21,000 OTR including Alfa Red paint at £510. Range of official fuel consumption figures for the Alfa Giulietta range: Urban 28.8 - 56.5 mpg (9.8 - 5.0 I/100km); Extra Urban 53.3 - 83.1 mpg (5.3 - 3.4 I/100km); Combined 40.4 - 70.6 mpg (7.0 - 4.0 I/100km); CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 162 - 104 g/km. Fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> figures are obtained for comparative purposes in accordance with EC directives/regulations and may not be representative of real-life driving conditions. Factors such as driving style, weather and road conditions may also have a significant effect on fuel consumption.

'£2,969 customer deposit, £6,798 optional final payment, 48 month contract. Promotien available on new Giulietta 1.4 MultiVir Sprint models registered by 31" March 2015. Only available in conjunction with Alfa Romeo Preferenza PCP. With Alfa Romeo Preferenza you have the option to return the vehicle and not pay the final payment, subject to the vehicle not having exceeded an agreed annual mileage (a charge of 6p per mile for exceeding 6,000 miles per annum in this example) and being in good condition. Finance subject to status. Guarantees may be required. Terms and Conditions apply. At participating Dealers only. Alfa Romeo Financial Services, PO 80X 4465, Slough, S.1.1 ORW. "On the road price includes 12 months' road fund licence, first vehicle registration fee, defivery, number plates and VAT. Figures and prices are correct at time of publishing. Retail sales only. Terms & Conditions apply & are subject to exclusions.



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Book a table at Yau's new restaurant



Hong Kong-born Alan Yau is the influential restaurateur behind Wagamama, Hakkasan and Yauatcha — each, in its way, responsible for a transformation in what we think of as Chinese dining. Now, he opens Duck & Rice, a "Chinese gastropub" on Berwick Street, Soho. Nobody except Yau knows exactly what it'll serve, but Adam Hyman, of Code London, describes it as the most hotly anticipated opening of the season — and he knows his onions.



15

Uncork a quality vintage "The summer of 1997 was, by turns, cool and damp, then blisteringly hot, then stormy," says Esquire's resident drinks expert Max Olesker. "The net result for the winemakers of the Côte de Nuits (the northern half of Burgundy's legendary 'golden slope') was a small but perfect crop of pinot noir grapes, which have created some estimable wines. The sublime Chambolle-Musigny is one of them and, happily, the optimum time to drink it is just about... now. Warm and elegant, with notes of strawberries and plum fruits, it's a wine that opens up beautifully in the glass — then demands you finish the bottle." £55, bbr.com



THE NEW MASERATI GHIBLI IS POWERED BY A RANGE OF ADVANCED 3.0 LITRE V6 ENGINES WITH 8-SPEED ZF AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION, INCLUDING, FOR THE FIRST TIME, A V6 TURBODIESEL ENGINE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE MASERATI GHIBLI, CALL 01943 871660 OR VISIT MASERATI.CO.UK

Official fuel consumption figures for Maserati Ghibli range in mpg (I/100km): Urban 18.0 (15.7) – 37.2 (7.6), Extra Urban 38.7 (7.3) – 56.5 (5.0), Combined 27.2 (10.4) – 47.9 (5.9). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 242 – 158 g/km. Fuel consumption and CO<sub>3</sub> figures are based on standard EU tests for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. Model shown is a Maserati Ghibli S at £70,598 On The Road including optional pearlescent paint at £1,776, 21" Titano design alloy wheels at £3,670 and Red brake callipers at £432.





With the new Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV, we haven't just made a great car - we've made stopping at petrol stations a distant memory. The fusion of electric and petrol technology can deliver a staggering 148 mpg¹ and creates a fraction of the CO₂ emissions of a conventional small car - just 44g/km. As a result you'll pay no road tax or Congestion Charge. Business users will only pay 5% Benefit in Kind rather than the 25%+ that most business users pay². If your commute is less than 30 miles your petrol consumption will be minimal too. That's because, in full electric mode, the Outlander PHEV has a range of up to 32 miles. Its combined petrol and electric range is an incredible 510 miles³. Plus its battery can be charged in a few hours via a domestic plug socket⁴ or a home Charge Point⁵. We've made history – you just need to make time for a test drive. We call this Intelligent Motion.

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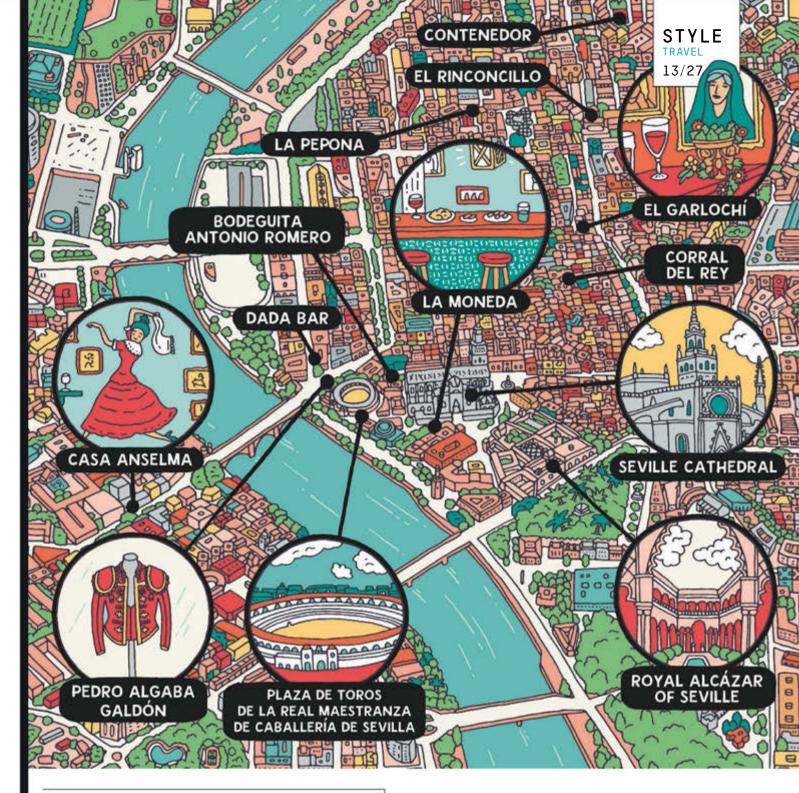
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1. Official EU MPG test figure shown as a guide for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. 2. 5% BIK compared to average rate of 25%. 3. 32 mile EV range achieved with full battery charge. 510 miles achieved with combined full battery and petrol tank. Actual range may vary depending on driving style and road conditions. 4. Domestic plug charge: 5 hours, 16 Amp home charge point: 3.5 hours, 80% rapid charge: 30mins. 5. Government subsidised charge points are available from a number of suppliers either free of charge or for a small fee - ask your dealer for more information. Offer ends 31st March 2015. 6. Prices start from £28,249 for Outlander PHEV GX3h. Metallic/pearlescent paint extra. Model shown is an Outlander PHEV GX4h at £33,399 including metallic paint. Prices shown include the Government Plug-in Car Grant and VAT (at 20%), exclude VED and First Registration Fee. Prices correct at time of going to print. For more information about the Government Plug-in Car Grant please visit www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants.

Outlander PHEV range fuel consumption in mpg (ltrs/100km): Full Battery Charge: no fuel used, Depleted Battery Charge: 48mpg (5.9), Weighted Average: 148mpg (1.9), CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions: 44 g/km.





THE BARBER DOSSIER

## **SEVILLE**

THE ANDALUCÍAN CAPITAL IS RICH IN CULTURE, TRADITION AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, TAPAS

→ Game of Thrones addicts — aka virtually the entire adult population of the western world — will doubtless descend on the capital of Andalucía after seeing it (or more precisely the stunning Alcázar Palace) stand in for Sunspear city in the forthcoming fifth season, but there are plenty of other reasons to visit. Namely, a civilised attitude to life, a compulsive desire to be on the streets at all hours, sensational tapas bars and beautiful North African-style architecture. Tom Barber is a founder of awardwinning travel site originaltravel.co.uk



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## LUNCH

After visiting the 15th-century cathedral, pop across the road to La Moneda, which, despite its location, is a local favourite. Try the tapas at the bar or the very good seafood (the swordfish cooked in manzanilla sherry is excellent) and shellfish in the restaurant proper at the back. restaurantelamoneda.es

A pretty nondescript looking restaurant in a similarly low-key street, ConTenedor is a classic covers and books case. The schtick involves daily changing menus prepared from whatever organic ingredients the chef can lay claim to and cooked in an open kitchen. Then add minimal-fuss service and a fab Spanish wine list with some hard-to-track-down gems. contenedorcultural.com

## DRINK

Seville has been pagan, Christian, Muslim (with strong Jewish influence) and finally Christian again, and so it's only right that the city's best bar oozes irreverent religiosity. El Garlochi (at 26 Calle de los Boteros) is a high camp riot of reliquaries, incense and velvet where you can commune with the signature Blood of Christ cocktail, a devilish combo of vodka, whisky and grenadine.

## DO

A proper tapeo or tapas bar crawl. This being Seville, Spanish time applies and supper can wait until late, so tapas is the early evening solution. The bar choice is endless but you should take in at least one of the following: El Rinconcillo (for old-school ambience); Bodeguita Antonio Romero (for the anchovies); or La Pepona (for more modern dishes). en.elrinconcillo.es; bodeguitaantonioromero.com

## SEE 1

A bullfight, but first read Hemingway's Death in the Afternoon to gain an insight into what's really going on. The Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza de Caballería de Sevilla (the city's bullring) is the world's oldest and hosts fights from Easter to October. realmaestranza.com

## **SHOP**

At Pedro Algaba on Calle Adriano, home to all things bullfighting: there are capes, matadors' threads and even seat pads for the uncomfy bullring benches.

is the preserve of octogenarians and best served at room temperature. It should be drunk chilled and by the gallon when on a tapeo. La Gitana, a drier manzanilla, should be your tipple of choice.

## **AVOID**

Thinking that sherry



Head across the Guadalquivir River to the gypsy quarter and Casa Anselma, the bar of legendary flamenco dancer La Anselma. The eponymous lady operates an idiosyncratic door policy. If you manage to talk your way in, you'll see flamenco performed just as it should be passionate, proud and pissed.

## STAY 4

Corral del Rey consists of two converted 17th-century buildings on either side of a narrow alleyway in the city's old Jewish Quarter, a short walk from the cathedral. The rooms are great, the rooftop plunge pool a winner in summer and the bar as good a place as any to start the evening. The one downside? Come evening's end. it's a bugger retracing your steps through the labyrinthine lanes. corraldelrey.com



## **PARTY**

We're not sure whether DadáBar is named after the radical art movement that encouraged irrational behaviour, but after a few too many mojitos at this late-night joint on Paseo Cristóbal Colón, irrationality beckons. facebook.com/dadabar.sevilla

## WHY NOW?

Two weeks after the proto-KKK pointy-hatted weirdness of Santa Semana (Holy Week — Easter, basically), the locals are itching to party, this time at Feria, with five days of flamenco and beer-fuelled festivities. The action takes place from 21-25 April, centred in a marguee village by the river. Befriend social media surfing Sevillans — ideally you need someone to go loco with.





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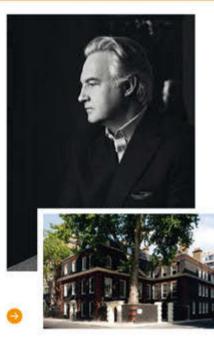


Jeep<sub>e</sub> with

Model shown is a Jeep  $\odot$  Grand Cherokee 3.0 CRD V6 Summit at £51,465 with metallic paint. OFFICIAL FUEL CONSUMPTION FIGURES FOR THE JEEP  $\odot$  GRAND CHEROKEE DIESEL RANGE IN MPG (I/100KM): EXTRA URBAN 39.2 (7.2) - 43.5 (6.5), URBAN 27.4 (10.3) - 30.4 (9.3), COMBINED 34.0 (8.3) - 37.7 (7.5), C0 $_2$  EMISSIONS: 198 G/KM. Fuel consumption and C0, figures are obtained for comparative purposes in accordance with £C directives/regulations and may not be representative of real-life driving conditions. Factors such as driving style, weather and road conditions may also have a significant effect on fuel consumption. "Promotion available on new Jeep Grand Cherokee models registered by 31st March 2015. Dealer Deposit Contribution only available in conjunction with Jeep Hire Purchase or Jeep Horizon PCP. 0% APR Representative Hire Purchase available for a 3 year term with a minimum customer deposit of 12% required. Finance subject to status. Guarantees may be required. Terms and Conditions apply. Jeep Financial Services, PO BOX 4465, Slough, S11 0RW. "New Grand Cherokee models will benefit from complimentary servicing covering the car for three years or 30.000 miles, including protection for the first MOT on all qualifying retail sales. Prices and specifications correct at time of going to print (01/15). Jeep is a registered trademark of Chrysler Group LLC.

## DRIVING FORCE

HOW JOHN RAY IS JUMP-STARTING DUNHILL



New creative director, John Ray, and Dunhill's London HQ, Bourdon House

When Alfred Dunhill took the reigns of his father's saddle-making business in 1893, he transformed the company from small leather goods manufacturer into an innovative motoring-wear brand. Though only 21 years old, he sensed that the advent of cars, then open-topped, would create a gap in the market for coats and accessories specifically designed for drivers.

The first person to patent storm-proofing, Dunhill set the groundwork for the brand as it's known today — one renowned for producing beautiful coats and durable leather accessories. It's this highly functional heritage on which new creative director John Ray is currently building.

When he moved to Dunhill in 2012, the former creative director of menswear at Gucci was given the task of bringing the 121-year-old British house back up-to-date. The straight-talking Scot has met the challenge head-on.

Ray's first collection for Dunhill, in stores now, is one of the freshest in many seasons. Soft shades of cobalt,



rose and sage make up the bulk of the collection; trousers are cut high, yet tapered; bomber jackets are slim and elegant, and tailoring is soft-shouldered and easy. Both traditional and modern, the collection feels sophisticated, wearable and, above all, British.

"Britishness is crucial to what we do," Ray says. "It's got to be traditional and classic in a way, but updated and contemporary. What I like about Dunhill is that it's super-masculine and super-British and I want to play with the constraints of that. It's got a lot of charm. We want to make sure

that everything functions well. I'm not into over decorative things. I want to strip it right back."

One clear
manifestation of Ray's
understated approach
is the brand's new
fragrance, Icon, which
launches this month. Housed in
a pleasingly hefty, engine-worked
metal case, it plays on the brand's
motoring-focused heritage. The scent
itself is surprisingly delicate, with

notes of leather,
lavender and Neroli,
and it's suitably
grown-up.
Ray will use
Autumn/Winter '15 to
build on the company's
impressive coat
manufacturing

history. "Everything Alfred Dunhill produced initially was made to protect drivers from the elements," he adds. "It's a really good starting point for outerwear — it has to function and it has to be practical." Long may you reign, John Ray.





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We hear you. You want it all. A sexy hot hatch with a 1.6 Turbo-GDi engine, heated front seats and with more gadgets than you can shake a USB stick at. You're so demanding, luckily so are we.

Fuel consumption figures in mpg (I/100km) for the Kia cee'd GT-Tech are: Urban 29.1(9.7), Extra Urban 46.3 (6.1), Combined 38.2(7.4). CO2 emissions are 171g/km. MPG figures are official EU test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. Model shown: cee'd 'GT-Tech' 1.6 T-GDI 201bhp 6-speed manual.

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MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only and may not reflect actual an the mod driving conditions. Terms and conditions apply, participating declers only or visit peugeoc.co.uk. To finance your lease/purchase we may introduce you to a limited number of lenders. "Passport Personal Lease. A guarantee may be required. Over 18s only. Written quotations available on request from Peugeot Financial Services, Quadrant House, Phincess Way, Redhill, RH1 1QA. Example based on the 308 Hatchback Sportium with 16" Diamond Alloys, with metallic point, customer initial payment 53,725, and optional final payment 58,860. 37 monthly payments payable. Annual mileage 6,000 miles. Excess mileage charges may apply. If you choose to pay the optional final payment, you can pay on a nanual payment to one of your monthly payments but with possible with Pessport, ask your Dealer for details. Offers apply to vehicles ordered by 31st March 2015. Visit peugeot.co.uk for full terms and conditions. Information correct at time of going to press. "When compared to 308 1.81 THP 125.

## **NEW PEUGEOT 308 SPORTIUM**





→ Despite a few rocky decades following protests over controversial farming methods, veal is popular again. Historically, people preferred it to be almost white but, of course, that means less flavour, so the trend now is to produce pink or rose veal, which guarantees the calf has been reared naturally outdoors.

The UK is home to some great producers so you don't need to buy pale, tasteless, imported stuff. Most good butchers are able to supply

British, while several major supermarkets stock West Country veal from Brookfield Farm, which is one of my restaurant suppliers.

The demand for British veal is still fairly low but it is among the world's best. It's not just the more obvious cuts that are worth your attention, either: often veal offal is delicious when cooked properly, especially if we make good of the various head cuts, including the cheeks. Try braised tail, too, as in my osso buco recipe.

#### ESCALOPE OF VEAL SERVES 4

This has always been a favourite dish of mine. You could also successfully make it using chicken or pork. The crisp breadcrumb coating works perfectly with the sharp Parmesan and lemon. Once very popular, it's not often encountered on restaurant menus these days.

#### DIRECTIONS

1 | Put one slice of veal on a sheet of cling film at least double its size. Carefully, with a meat or cutlet bat (a rolling pin or side of a cleaver will do), bash each piece out flat into a neat 1cm-thick escalope. Repeat for the other three slices. 2 | Season the meat with salt and pepper then lightly coat with flour, patting any excess off with your hands, before passing them through the beaten egg and finally the breadcrumbs. 3 | Heat about 1cm of oil in a frying pan and cook the escalopes for 2-3mins on each side until golden. Add a knob of butter at the end of cooking and turn them once more. Transfer to 4 | Arrange the rocket leaves with some curls of Parmesan on the plate and a lemon wedge or two. Whisk together the vinegar and oil and season. Pour over the leaves. Serve immediately or the escalopes will go cardboard-like if left to hang around.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 4 slices of veal from the rump, weighing about 150–160g
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2-3tbsps flour
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 40-50g fresh white breadcrumbs
- Vegetable or corn oil for frying
- A couple of good knobs of butter
- A couple of handfuls of rocket, washed and dried
- 50-60g Parmesan shavings
- Lemon wedges
  1tbsp white wine vinegar or balsamic
  3tbsps olive oil



## OSSO BUCO ALLA MILANESE SERVES 4

This is an unusual cut for veal but there's no reason a good butcher shouldn't do it for you. It's basically a slice through the shin and, depending on what's available, you may need to serve one or two pieces per person. The traditional thing to serve with this is creamy polenta or you could serve mash with some Parmesan stirred into it. <u>Another traditional</u> accompaniment is gremolata, basically grated lemon zest, crushed and chopped garlic and olive oil.



#### **DIRECTIONS**

1 | Lightly flour and season the veal pieces. Heat the vegetable oil in a heavy frying pan and fry the pieces of veal until nicely coloured on both sides, remove from the pan and put aside.
2 | In a large, heavy-based pan gently cook the onion, garlic, carrot and celeriac in the butter until soft. Add the saffron, thyme and tomato purée and cook for a minute or so, then stir in the flour. Gradually whisk in the wine

and the stock and bring to the boil.

3 | Add the pieces of veal and cook slowly on top of the stove, or in a medium-heat oven, with a lid on for about 1–1½ hours, or until the meat is tender. The sauce should be quite thick by now; if not, remove the pieces of veal and simmer the sauce until it thickens, then return the meat to the sauce. When reheated through, serve with the creamed polenta.

#### FOR THE CREAMED POLENTA

1 | Bring the milk to the boil in a thick-bottomed pan, then add the garlic, bay leaf, salt, pepper and nutmeg. Simmer for 5mins, then whisk in all of the polenta. 2 | Cook on a low heat for about 10mins, stirring every so often so that it doesn't stick to the bottom of the pan. Add the cream and Parmesan and cook for a further 5mins





www.smeguk.com

# MOBILE DISCO

FROM THE APOCALYPSE TO A PLAGUE OF IPODS, THE NEW LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SPORT IS READY FOR ANYTHING

→ Iceland during mid-winter is not a welcoming environment. Snow streams horizontally into the windscreen on the back of a savage wind that sweeps straight off the icy glaciers. It's also relentlessly dark, with the sun only peeking (barely) above the skyline for a few hours around lunchtime.

If it can feel like the end of the world, then Land Rover's new Discovery Sport feels like a car that's well built for the apocalypse. This new Freelander replacement has clearly been influenced by its flashier cousin the Range Rover — meaner looks, bigger muscles, more attitude — but at a size

that doesn't feel like you're driving a stolen tank around (even though it can accommodate seven seated). Inside, there's a plusher feel with a new 8in touchscreen and more USB ports than an IT help desk.

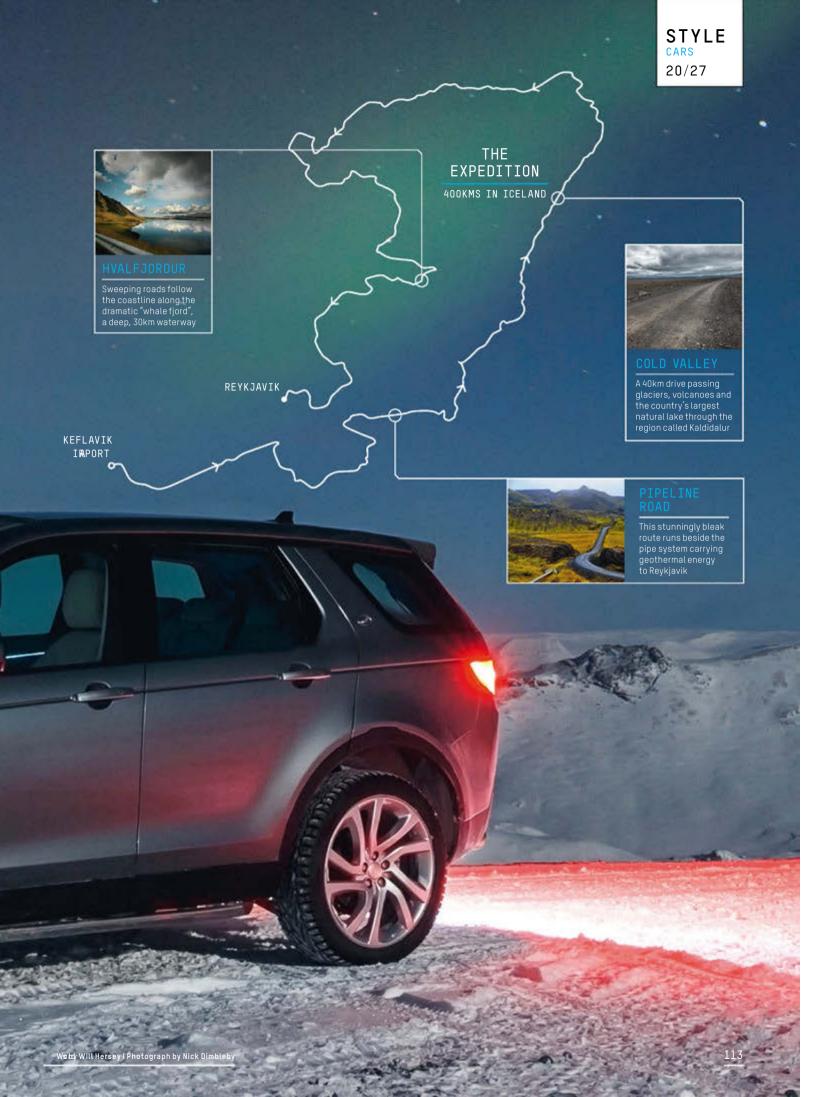
It's well-suited to the tranquil roads of urban England then, but this being a Land Rover, it's still a car that needs to deliver out there. In the wild. Because it can. From loose tracks and slippy dual carriageways to snow-covered single-lanes and ice-packed hills, the Discovery Sport barely gave a murmur; a car that's mouth as well as trousers.

\* ESQUIRE APPROVES

Land Rover Discovery Sport

Engine... 2.2-litre SD4 Turbodiesel Power... 190bhp Top speed... 117mph 0-62mph... 8.4secs Economy... 46.3mpg Price... From £32,395







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Another Country.



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**INDISPENSABLES** 

WINE Blue Nun, in**n**it! **SPIRIT** Quintessentially Vodka.

**BEER** Camden Beer. **SNACK**  ${\tt Bacon\,sand} w ich.$ **SWEET** Kit Kat. CLUB George, Mayfair. RESTAURANT

River Cafe, Hammersmith.

The Havelock Tavern, Kensington.

#### SONG

"Unfinished Sympathy", by Massive Attack.

#### HOME

CHAIR Ercol. LAMP Standard. **BED LINEN** It has to be old, I don't like new

bed linen. DESK Another Country. SOFA

Neo Wall, Living Divani. David Austen's

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# THE VAT MEN

BRITAIN'S ARTISAN DISTILLERS ARE RAISING THE BAR ON YOUR NEXT DRINK OF CHOICE

→ Small batch spirits producers are behind some of the best liquors available in the UK. These bespoke brews are being created with love and care by regional distilleries, whose founders are passionate about the drinks they're producing. Here are six of the finest, with tasting notes from the owners.

#### City of London Distillery

Opening near Fleet Street in 2012, CoLD is the first gin distillery in central London for nearly 200 years. "The City of London Distillery has brought gin back to its historic roots," says founder/master distiller Jonathan Clark. CoLD's medal-winning Sloe Gin is well worth seeking out. Tasting notes: "Sloe berry flavours are mixed with blackberry and black pepper, complementing the piney juniper and citrus from the dry gin. Sugar is used sparingly to sweeten the bitter sloe berries without overpowering the base gin. It has a pleasant texture and doesn't cloy on the palette." £28, cityoflondondistillery.com

SLOE GIN



London's smallest, most unique microdistillerv is in Ian Hart's home in Highgate. The former Wall Street trader has found huge success with Sacred Gin. "We are a small producer and wish to remain so," Hart says. "We have no ambitions to expand and sell to a larger company." Sacred's range includes flavoured gins, a Campari equivalent called Rosehip Cup and a dry vodka. Tasting notes: "It's crystal clear and superbly balanced, with a delicately spicy nose and faint aromas of fennel, nuts, dill and aniseed." £34, sacredspiritscompany.com

#### Sipsmith

"Until we opened in 2009, no one was handcrafting gin in London the traditional way, or had been for nearly 200 years," says Sipsmith co-founder Fairfax Hall. "Our aim is to bring uncompromising quality and character back to gin. Tasting notes: "Imagining the botanicals as parts of an orchestra, we take the lead instrument and amplify it, and raise the decibels by increasing the proof alcohol. VJOP is a strong gin for juniper fanatics." £40, sipsmith.com











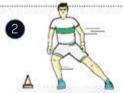
#### TUNE YOUR BODY FOR SQUASH

You'll need stamina, power, strength and speed to beat your best mate into next week on court. Get started with these drills and let me know how you get on. @harryjamesonPT



#### POWER: SPEED SKATES

Lean forward and bend your knees. Put your weight on your left leg, and sweep your right leg out left wide behind your body. Sweep back and switch sides in one movement. Repeat for 30–60secs. Rest for 45secs and repeat for 3–5 sets more.



#### AGILITY: LATERAL COURT SPRINTS

Mark two points 10m apart. Touch one marker with your hand, and quickly side shuffle to the next, touch it and repeat. Once you've returned to the start twice, rest for 30-60secs and repeat for 3-5 sets.



#### STAMINA: SUICIDES

Spread four markers at 5–6m intervals. One set is running to the first one and back to the start, then the second and back to the start and repeat for the third and fourth. If fit, do 3 sets continuously then rest for 45–60secs. Aim for 3–4 sets.



SPEED: PARTNER DRILL

Place four markers of different colours in a 1m square. Stand in the middle and get your partner to call out colours. You must lean to touch the marker, then return to standing upright. Go for 45 secs then switch roles to improve your reaction times.



#### WE ALL KNOW THAT THE FIRST STEP IS THE HARDEST

If you're not quite ready for a triathlon, how does a Bodycombat<sup>™</sup> class, followed by a cappuccino sound? Or maybe just a swim? With three month memberships\* available at David Lloyd Leisure, it's time to take the plunge.









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\*Monthly rolling contract after a 3 month initial commitment.



# NOW BE BOLD

DITCH THE DRAB AND GO FULL-COLOUR FOR SPRING

#### CAPITAL COLLECTION

DSquared2 comes to London for the new season

To coincide with the 20th anniversary of its debut runway show, DSquared2 has opened its first UK store at 49 Conduit Street on the corner of London's Savile Row. The label, founded by Canadian

brothers Dean and Dan Caten, is perhaps best known for its flamboyant take on classic suits. The new shop's ground floor houses men's accessories, underwear and the label's classic collection, which for Spring/Summer 2015 features a series of simple but elegantly cut suits, including this summery two-piece, two-button number. dsquared2.com



## 2

#### KNITWEAR TO DYE FOR

A bright outlook from John Smedley

John Smedley has been dyeing garments at its Derbyshire mill for 100 years and to celebrate, the knitwear brand has created a special capsule collection. "A Century of Colour" is inspired by Smedley's extensive archive and offers a series of pieces that feature an anti-graduation effect, achieved by dipping ready-dyed garments into a reducing solution, and hanging them in specific positions. There's a rather amazing lapel and patch-pocketed cardigan, but Esquire's picks are these sweaters great statement pieces for spring. johnsmedley.com



MULTI-TONE SEA ISLAND COTTON SWEATERS, £139 EACH, BY JOHN SMEDLEY



#### START AFRESH

Shoreditch's Mr Start breaks with tradition



Mr Start, the label founded by designer and retailer Philip Start, has been a Shoreditch resident since 2008. His aim was to create luxurious, contemporary and affordable tailoring, and by all accounts, he's

achieved that goal. Prices for Mr Start's made-to-measure service start at £895, but the S/S'15 ready-to-wear collection is equally laudable, thanks to its minimalist feel and understated casualwear. The uniquely

styled "shomber", for example, is cut from shirt cotton and features regular button fastening down the front while the cuffs, hem and collar are lifted straight from a bomber jacket. mr-start.com



# Philips AirFloss protects against bleeding gums.

Philips AirFloss is a revolutionary device proven to reduce inflammation and bleeding in 95% of people, when used just once a day as part of your evening brushing routine.

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Photograph by Lisa Gee



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# **GEAR SHIFT**

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#### SUNGLASSES, BY PRADA

Perfect mount for the mobile heads-up display unit. £230, davidclulow.com

#### POWER METER, BY STAGES

Measures output
of the rider
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is endorsed by
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Team Sky. £600,
stagescycling.com

#### → Cycling may be Britain's most fashionable sport, but it's taken the gear a while to catch up. First Rapha and Vulpine proved staying safe no longer required hi-viz tabards, before a new wave of start-ups created smart tech that allowed cyclists to equip their ride with wireless heart-rate monitors, GPS and even handlebar-mounted smartphones. Now you can mix both, with these stylish, safe and clever pieces of urban armour. Here's

Esquire's pick of the best.

#### T1 HELMET, BY TORCH

Features lights that wrap to the sides — useful when turning. USB-charged. £85, torchapparel.eu

#### 2.0 AIRBAG, BY HÖVDING

Collar and shell that gives three times the shock absorption of a helmet when it inflates on impact. Swedish, of course. £250, hovding.com

#### THE SAMURAI VEST FOR MEN, BY HENRICHS

This highly reflective Swiss Schoeller fabric is wind and waterproof and so reflective it can be seen 100m away. £72, henrichs.co.uk



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# CULTURE

# "GENTLEMEN, UNSHEATH YOUR PENCTUS"

(Kinky) sex in the city: Jamie Dornan in 50 Shades of Grey

Some extremely helpful lessons in love from Christian Grey



#### Women you've just met adore thinly veiled chat about your sexual sins.

Do as Christian Grey, the sexually dominant hero of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, does when he first meets naïve virgin Anastasia Steele, played in director Sam Taylor-Johnson's big-screen adaptation by Dakota Johnson. She's meekly crept into his office to interview the billionaire CEO for her student mag, and he's using the opportunity to lay it on thick with barely concealed sex chat at every turn. "Oh, I exercise control in all things, Miss Steele," he replies to a question about his charitable work in Darfur. After that, it's a pretty seamless journey to S&M town.

#### It helps if you're good looking.

If you want to introduce your date to the joys of bondage, it's good if you're handsome as hell. In *Fifty Shades*, Ana agrees to become the sexual submissive of a man who "looks like a male model in a pose for a glossy, high-end magazine". In the film, Grey is played by a former male model, Jamie Dornan, who posed in glossy, high-end magazines (including this one). Which might explain why she takes so well to being bossed about so much.



From top: Grey advocates horseplay, fiddling with Steele's drawers and a good old-fashioned squeeze (genital clamps not shown)

#### Not a male model? Hope lies in an unspecified expensive body wash.

Even if your date might be hesitant about spanking, win her over with a stimulating shower gel. Every time Ana's about to call time on caning-asforeplay, she gets a whiff of Christian Grey's "expensive body wash" and is on all fours. In the book, she's not exactly strong on detail so you'll have to work out what it might be for yourself. (It's likely not Dove for Men Extra Fresh.)

#### Chicks crave spontaneity. So stalk her.

Surprise your girl with a visit to her workplace, even if she hasn't disclosed where that is. Better still if her job is at a hardware store into which you can waltz to order up a selection of cable ties, masking tape and filament rope. "Are you redecorating?" she'll ask, unaware that two weeks later she'll be strung up with cable wires having the time of her life in your Red Room of Pain. Atta girl.

#### Non-disclosure agreements are the new foreplay.

She'll understand the need for lawyers when she gets a load of the playroom, a citrus smelling, softly lit spot with a large X on the far wall and an 8ft-square iron grid on the ceiling from which hangs a selection of ropes, chains and shackles. Best if she can keep all these paddles, whips, riding crops and canes your special little secret and sign here...

#### ...And contracts are sexy as hell.

Paperwork has been the missing spark from your far-from-sizzling sex life. Do as impossibly good-looking Christian Grey does and draft the dos and don'ts of your dominant-submissive sex games and she'll be all heart-eyed emojis. Or at the very least tied to a wall.

#### Ladies go wild for email.

Email is the prime form of sex correspondence between Grey and Steele and the forum for flirting, foreplay and spelling out exactly what you want to do in the bedroom. Send her the full dictionary definition of submissive so she can bat back by defining compromise. It's like Snapchat never happened.

#### Date five: take her to the STI clinic.

There's no two ways of spinning this so just tell her: you've had such a wonderful night of passion together, you'd like to take the relationship to the next level and get her checked out for the clap. Also [tiny voice], you'd quite like to watch.

#### Size does matter — especially in ceiling-to-window ratios.

Ana digs "considerable length" in both the trouser and window department. Even if you're short on the former, distract her with floor-to-ceiling windows in every room you romance her. Other tips: blindfold her; pop on the cuffs; rule out touching.

#### Girls are turned on by mummy issues.

To get her into bed, go all Freudian. Happily for Christian Grey, he's all over that. His adoptive mother doesn't do physical contact. His birth mother was a "crack whore". And some nice lady seduced him at 15 and turned him into her adolescent sex slave. Emotional baggage is the new GSOH. Would madam like to step this way?

# BEHOLD THE IRON KINGDOM OF METALLIOS!

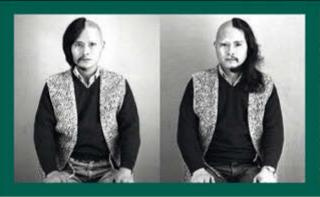
Is this the latest addition to the Game of Thrones opening credits, or a piece of seminal post-war Japanese art?

Yes, it's the latter, but don't be too disappointed (especially given that Game of Thrones season five begins on Sky Atlantic on 13 April). The work on this page is a piece by septuagenarian Japanese artist Chu Enoki, and his stuff is still pretty rad. Enoki, who's having his first solo show in Europe this month, is known for making elaborate sculptures from scrap metal, such as "RPM 1200 Iron City" (below), or using deactivated

Kalashnikovs, and even featuring working cannons (below right), from which he has been known to fire flowers. He also once shaved off the right half of his body hair for a performance piece, then four years later, did the left ("Going to Hungary with Hangari", below left). So basically, quite the guy for cocktail hour.

Chu Enoki: Enoki Chu, 11 February to 11 April, White Rainbow, London white-rainbow.co.uk









Back in a more innocent time, six years before a criminal lawyer called Saul Goodman met a teacher called Walter White and one of the TV phenomena of the modern age was born, there was another guy named Jimmy McGill. And yes, if you're a Breaking Bad aficionado, you'll already know that Jimmy and Saul are one and the same, but you might not have known how the transformation, a reverse of the Biblical Saul-to-Paul conversion — from dark

to even darker — took place.
Well, now you'll find out.
Better Call Saul is BB
creators Vince Gilligan and
Peter Gould's origin story
for Jimmy/Saul, once again
played by seasoned comedy
actor Bob Odenkirk. Will
BCS be as addictive as BB?
Will you find yourself
emerging, blinking, from
a lost weekend with no
sense of time or place?
Series two is
green-lit for 2016,
so we're guessing
it's a yes.

Better
Call Saul
will be shown
weekly on
Netflix from
9 February



## HE SEES A DARKNESS

Denis Johnson's new spy novel is murky, mysterious and monstrous

ne of the magical feats of literature is its ability to make you use your imagination. Words on a page can become the most vivid landscapes, the most magnetic characters, the most heart-rending scenes, once our synapses have been set to work. Yet Denis Johnson wants none of that. In his new work. The Laughing Monsters, the National Book Award-winning author of Tree of Smoke does everything in his power to shut down our senses and sensibilities. Want to know where you are? You'd be lucky. Want to know who to root for? Not likely. Want to know what the hell's going on? Guess again. And it's terrifying.

It starts in Sierra Leone, where our narrator, a black-haired Dane called Roland Nair (Nair as in "nadir"? "Ne'er-do'well"?), has landed on assignment for NIIA, which we're told stands for Nato Intelligence Interoperability Architecture (it's a real, if lesser-known organisation). That assignment appears to be to contact and report the movements of an old acquaintance of his, Michael Adriko.

Now, who is he? Difficult to say.

He's a large, charismatic man with a shiny bald head, who has been affiliated with both the US military and the Lord's Resistance Army but who shows allegiance to no one.

We know the pair go way back — he's saved Nair's life three times, in fact — and he wants Nair to join him in Uganda where he plans to marry his new girlfriend, Davidia St Clair, and also flog some fake enriched uranium. This, Nair tells Davidia, is the post-9/11 version of "the old Great Game", where the fear — and the funds — are limitless.

So far, so intriguing, but Johnson isn't letting us have it so easy. For every snippet of juicy information — hints of ever-deeper intelligence operations, covert communications systems, new players (the British: "MI4, or 5, or 6"; Mossad) — he plunges his readers into confusion. When the uranium scam doesn't go to plan, Nair, Adriko and his bride-to-be end up in the Congo.

Suddenly, they've been captured by the



The Laughing Monsters (Harvill Secker) by Denis Johnson is out on 12 February

we — know it, they've been passed on to someone else, for some other purpose, and the chinks of light, the hope of clarity, start to fade.

The title of the book is a reference, Nair tells us, to Michael Adriko's homeland,
The Happy Mountains, which were renamed "The Laughing Monsters" by the 19th century missionary James Hannington "in frustration and disgust". It also refers to our

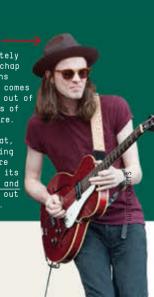
protagonists, Nair and Adriko — both wayward forces driven by unclear motives — whose dialogue-heavy scenes loom from the page.

But wait. Isn't there another monster lurking? Another presence who disseminates through his pages, and leaves his readers scrabbling blindly? And is that the hint of a smile?

This delicately cheekboned chap has lady-fans aplenty and comes a-hollerin' out of the badlands of Hertfordshire.
Rarely seen without a hat, we're assuming his locks are attached to its brim. Chaos and the Calm is out on 23 March.

GETTY I HEARST STUDIOS





Congolese army,

but before they — and

# SPY.

While we wait for the next Bond, two new spy dramas will keep us in the mood. But do they have the 007 staples?

#### The Game

The improbably competent youngster with an axe to grind

The preposterously

pseudonymed and

The quintessential

**English gent with** 

The spine-tingly

score

a penchant for fine tailoring

patriarch

conspicuously cast

This six-part cold war-set drama from director Toby Whithouse (of Being Human) stars Tom Hughes as Joe Lambe: a young agent with a cut-glass jaw and a dead lover on his conscience.

Joe's MI5 cell is run by "Daddy", played by Brian Cox (the actor, not the prof), whose face is as densely lined as the bookshelves

With his suits, cigarettes and mummy issues, fellow MI5

Music maestro Daniel Pemberton keeps it trad and John Barry-esque: lurching piano thumps, sweeping strings,

Not to be seen. The most gadgetry you'll get in The Game, at The invisible car least as far as episode one is concerned, is a couple of tiddly

Alan Montag (Jonathan Aris). Fiddles with countless The on-the-spectrum machines at a desk. Is partial to a V-neck. techno boffin with a penchant for knitwear

The hopefullypossibly-but-notdefinitely knowingly terrible jokes

The baddie with the eccentrically performed behavioural tic

of the oak-panelled rooms in which he seems solely to exist.

agent Bobby Waterhouse (Paul Ritter) embodies the British toff so beloved/beloathed worldwide.

impatient snares like footsteps shuffling up a shadowy alley.

pistols. Oh, and the threat of imminent nuclear destruction.

Sample joke: "Do you think he's all right?" "I doubt it: you just

hit him with a plank." Which is also how we feel.

The agency has a Russian target called Odin (Jevgenij Sitochin), a diminutive villain whose signature move is peeling apples with his penknife. More threatening than popping open a mini box of raisins, but only just.

Kingsman: The Secret Service

This contemporary film from director Matthew Vaughn stars Taron Egerton as Eggsy Unwin, a young recruit for Kingsman - a private Savile Row spy agency — with a less than cut-glass accent and the legacy of a dead father on his conscience.

Eggsy's Kingsman cohorts are overseen by Arthur (yes, like King), played by Sir Michael Caine, whose face is as twinkly as the whisky-filled glassware on which he seems solely to subsist.

With his suits and Oxfords, Harry Hart (Colin Firth) embodies the British toff marketed worldwide. Or at least those bits Mr Porter delivers, as it will be selling Kingsman clothing forthwith.

> Iggy Azalea, Ellie Goulding and Take That all make an appearance on the soundtrack. So creepy and terrifying in its own special way.

Pick from poison pens, bulletproof umbrellas, hologram glasses, and a vast array of more traditional weaponry in the ultra-violent Kingsman. It's not clear whether Mr Porter will be stocking these.

Merlin (Mark Strong). Fiddles with countless machines at a desk. Is partial to a V-neck.

Vaughn's film contains a crucial "humorous" plot point that revolves around a Swedish princess's anus and makes the plank joke look positively Wildean.

The agency has an American target called Valentine (Samuel L Jackson), a leisurewear-loving villain whose signature characteristic is an outrageous lisp. Let's just say, Mike Tyson should sue for royalties.

The Game starts in February on BBC Two; Kingsman: The Secret Service is out now

#### KNOW YOUR LANK-HAIRED SINGER-SONGWRITERS

Floppy haired is now referred to by his record label as TMTC (pointless given the monosyllabic nature of Me To Church"). Why? It managed 10 weeks at Belgium's Flemish chart.



Tom Odell is the only blondie here, and has already serenaded models at Burberry fashion shows and provided the music for the horny penguin on that John Lewis ad Recently chopped off his man-bob, remains eligible by dint floaty forelocks.

Matt Corby comes from Oyster Bay in New South Wales and looks a bit like Joaquin Phoenix in that fake documentary where he lost his shit. He eschews rap breathy folk-pop won award nods in Australia.

Willie Nelson has worn his hair long through most of the frizzy Seventies, peroxided Eighties, curtained Nineties quiffy Noughties and, goddamn it, he'll be wearing piqtails when all the previous whippersnappers here are back to short back and sides. Or bald

# MEET THE BEST BEST MAN IN THE BUSINESS

# THE WEDDING RINGER IS A GREAT MOVIE TITLE. BUT IT'S AN EVEN BETTER JOB TITLE

In The Wedding Ringer (geddit?),
Kevin Hart plays a best-man-for-hire
who is recruited by a friendless groom,
played by Josh Gad. Those crazy
comedy types! Only, maybe not so crazy.
Esquire spoke to "EJ", the founder
of Hire A Best Man (hireabestman.
co.uk), who's been offering his services
to those in need (including actual full
best man standing-ining) since 2013.

#### **Esquire:** What made you think there'd be a market for rentable best men?

EJ: I'd had a very positive experience being best man for a close friend and thought I could use my skills to give people better wedding days while carving myself an exciting career. I don't do nine-to-five.

#### **ESQ:** How many times have you actually been a best man?

EJ: I've been best man 16 times, provided best men for other weddings and done some other elements of the job, including writing the speech and sorting the stag do, for many more.

#### **ESQ:** How many stag dos have you been on?

EJ: Most of the stag dos I arrange are done for other best men and I don't usually attend; however, I have still attended close to 25, from a choir-singing day in a Scottish church to a monster-truck rally in Dubai. **ESQ:** What's been the worst (ie, the best)?

EJ: One involved the quite standard comedy club visit, except I had booked an open mic slot for the groom that I sprung on him when we got there. He powered through some nervousness and gave a funny five minutes. Despite the myth, the best stag dos aren't the ones where the groom passes out drunk at 5pm.

ESQ: What kind of guy hires you? Is it one

who's not overrun with friends?

**EJ:** There are those who have lost contact with friends, there are also guys who have

How we imagine EJ's nights pan out

lots of friends but they either don't trust them, their fiancée doesn't or they want to let their friends enjoy the experience while letting a pro handle the important bits.

#### ESQ: Any unusual requests?

EJ: I've been asked to provide a dwarf best man before, which I did.

#### ESQ: Have you been rumbled?

EJ: I have been twice, but only by guests and the reactions are always positive. In one job, the bride told me at the end of the day that she knew I wasn't really the groom's childhood friend but thanked me for making him feel at ease.

#### **ESQ:** What's it like giving a speech about a guy you don't really know that well?

EJ: I enjoy it and the groom is often calmer knowing that no stories about "that bird he got up the duff at uni" will surface. I've also found that, just like with "psychics", there are certain things you can say that appear personal but would in fact be relevant to 95 per cent of people. Combine this with some research, a first impression and some wit and no one need ever know you've only had one Skype chat.

#### ESQ: Do you know fail-safe speech jokes?

EJ: People are usually supportive whatever, but I like: "What can I say about Daniel [looking at speech] he's charming, funny, handsome and... sorry Daniel, I can't read your writing, what's that say?"

The Wedding Ringer is out on 20 February

#### LITERARY ANIMAL OF THE MONTH THE WOLF

That Hilary Mantel has a lot to answer for: since bagging the Booker for Wolf Hall in 2009, she's clearly put the writerly world on a lupine tip, if the current round of forthcoming titles is anything to go by. In her debut novel Wolf Winter (Hodder) out on 5 February, Swedish writer Cecilia Ekbäck travels back to 18th-century Lapland where a group of settlers come across a mutilated body. Is it wolves, or is it murder? An icy mystery unfolds.

Wolves also get the blame in William Giraldi's Hold the Dark (No Exit Press), out on 26 February, this time set in an Alaskan village from which some kids have gone AWOL. Wolf expert Russell Core is brought in, but soon finds out the villagers' secrets are blacker than the Alaskan noonday winter sun.

In Eben Venter's Wolf, Wolf (Scribe), out on 12 March, a more fairy tale version of the beast comes a-knocking in the form of Mattie's boyfriend Jack, who enters the house in Cape Town that Mattie shares with his dying father dressed as a wolfhound. As you do. Manhood in all its forms is tried on and tested here.

If you'd like your wolves closer to home, Sarah Hall's The Wolf Border (Faber & Faber), out on 26 March, features an earl attempting to reintroduce grey wolves to the Lake District (they adore a tea shop).

Next month: the muskrat.



# THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE CRAMMED

In Seventies' New York, Studio 54 was the nightclub to be seen in, and preferably by Swedish photographer Hasse Persson



Above: Truman Capote, fashion maven DD Ryan and Interview's Bob Colacello. Below: a Calvin Klein party, 1978

Like bushbabies, omelettes and David Cameron, clubs are difficult things to photograph. How do you capture their magic — the intensity, the aura, the sheer unadulterated pleasure of them — on something as literal as film? (We're just talking about nightclubs now, btw.) A flashbulb freeze-frame of the greatest night of your youth would probably reveal only a dingy room full of fag smoke, cheap lasers and spotty oiks with red-eye. How then, do you do photographic justice to the best club in the ward 120

in the world? This was Swedish photographer Hasse Persson's dilemma shooting Studio 54, Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager's temple of Seventies disco cool to which he had regular and seemingly unfettered access. His photographs, collected in his new book, named after the club, feature everyone from Michael Jackson and Liza Minnelli to Truman Capote and Andy Warhol - plus a bevvy of bare-naked ladies and mustachioed gents in leather chaps and throb with the hazy energy that hangs over



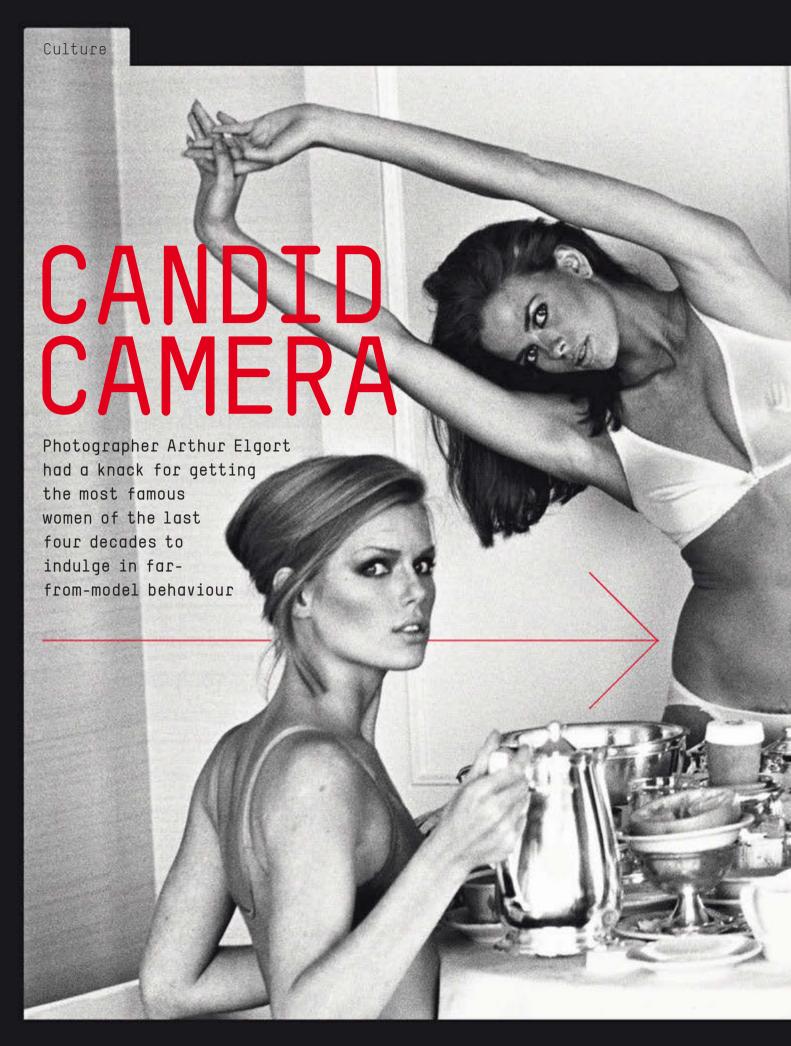


Photographer Hasse Persson (far left) capturing the mischief of Studio 54's busy bathroom

the fondest of misspent memories.

So how did he do it? He got in for starters — no mean feat, given that the queue of hopefuls could reportedly sometimes reach 300m (though as Persson modestly puts it in his introduction, "I have no idea if the lines were that long, since I never had to wait to get in"). He was bold, staking out the middle of the sweatdrenched dancefloor and the darkest somethingelse-drenched corners. Or, for the more technically inclined, he used a flash and a 30-second exposure. [Killjoys.]









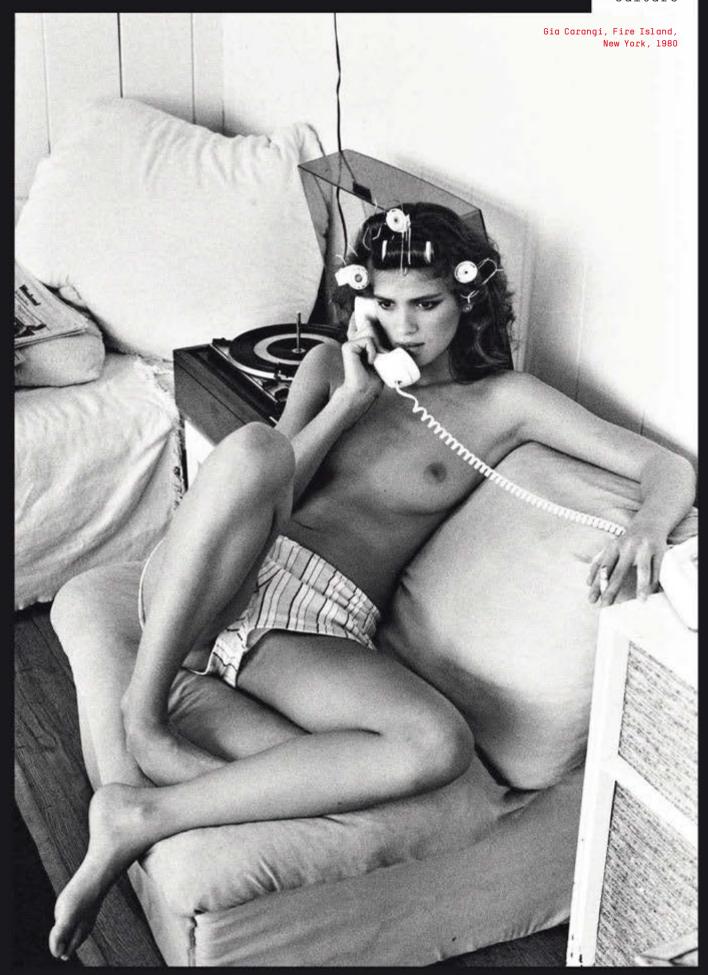
rust us when we tell you that you have a lot to thank Arthur Elgort for. The image you see on the previous page from 1976 — you know, just three of the most gorgeous women of the era enjoying coffee and grapefruit in their underwear — would not have existed if it weren't for him. Not only because he took the picture, but because he shook up the world of fashion photography, which before he came along had been full of unnaturally arched backs and craned necks and rib-crushing couture.

Elgort, a New Yorker, let his models move, and mess around, and (gasp!) have a good time. And doesn't it show?

A word on those models: Elgort made his debut shooting for British *Vogue* in 1971, and later hit his stride in the age of the supermodel in the Eighties , when curves and cheekbones were in and surnames were out. Christy, Linda, Naomi and Cindy all posed for him, as before them did proto-supers including Patti Hansen, Beverly Johnson, Lisa Taylor and Gia Carangi, and after them have the newer supers: Kate Moss, Karlie Kloss and Liya Kebede. A book of Elgort's work, *The Big Picture*, has just been published and, as you'll see, and like we said, we have a lot to be thankful for. And, after 44-and-counting years of photographing the world's most beautiful women, so does he.



Arthur Elgort: The Big Picture is out now (Steidl



# Culture

## AND THE CANINE OSCAR GOES TO... THIS YEAR'S BREAKTHROUGH DOG STAR TAKES A BOW(WOW)

If there was an Academy Award for best acting by a dog — and quite frankly we're not sure why there isn't — then labrador/ shepherd/shar-pei cross Luke (and his brother and body double, er, Body) would be a shoo-in. He is/ they are the stars of Hungarian director Kornél Mundruczó's

decidedly peculiar new film, White God, about a lonely girl whose mutt is turned loose in Budapest and subjected to all kinds of animal cruelty, before he exacts his violent revenge. As such Luke/Body is required to act first as a cuddly pet, then baleful stray, then hardened fighter and finally the godfather - OK

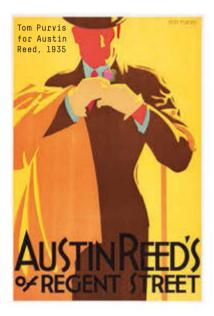
fine, the dogfather — of a 250-strong canine crime syndicate that threatens to shut down the city (we told you it was weird). We'd like to see Daniel Day-Lewis pull off that one.





# BOLDLY DRAWN BOY

Think fashion illustration is just for the womenfolk? A new coffee-table book puts menswear drawings firmly in the frame

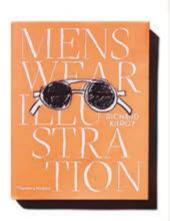


"James Dean in Sweater", created for Vogue Hommes by Husam el Odeh

OK, so you've been to a shop, taken a picture of a nice pair of trousers on your phone and stuck it up on Instagram. But did you capture the essence of the garment? Have you channelled the designer's ideas through your pixels? Is that snap of a pair of strides a work of art in its own right (even with filters)? Nay, nay and thrice nay. That is what menswear illustration is for, and also why it has been deemed worthy of its own book, written by fashion illustrator Richard Kilroy, and out this month. Kilroy collects the work of 40 of the top menswear illustrators working today. From the vivid watercolours (right) of Russian-born Eduard Erlikh, who has worked for Vogue and W; to the fluid lines of Sweden's Amelie Hegardt, with projects for Guerlain and Harrods under her belt; or the labour-intensive oil paintings of Korea's Lee Song for the label Wooyoungmi (far right), which are among the few fashion campaigns to feature background cameos from Marx and Engels. No doubt they'd have been thrilled.



Menswear Illustration by Richard Kilroy is out on 23 February (Thames & Hudson)





## NOTEWORTHY MUSIC THIS MONTH

In ascending order of seniority



#### **All We Are**

by All We Are, out on 2 February (Double Six Records)

This trio may have found each other at university in Liverpool but this definitely ain't Merseybeat. Hailing from Ireland, Brazil and Norway, the two-guys-onegirl group veer from delicate electro-funk with falsetto harmonies to surging pop ballads in a Cocteau Twins vein (or, as they describe themselves, "Bee Gees on diazepam"). This album, part-written in a Norwegian cabin, shows an invention and knack for melody that belies its status as a debut.



#### **Vestiges & Claws**

by José González, out on 16 February (Peacefrog Records)

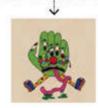
Sweden's José González returns with the third album in the notional acoustic trilogy that started with 2005's Veneer and continued with 2007's In Our Nature, and doesn't it just feel like a warm hug of delicate finger-picked folk loveliness? A recent interest in African drone-blues makes its presence heard, as does the existential theme of life and what it is good for (quite a few things, actually).



#### We Are Undone

by Two Gallants, out on 2 February (ATO Records)

San Francisco band Two Gallants were doing the noisy-duo thing when Royal Blood were still in short tight black-jeans, and their sound has evolved a good deal since their 2004 debut, The Throes. As has their native city, the centre of much of the frenzied consumption and consumerism of the technological age, which becomes something of a thematic concern on their part-raucous, part-reflective fifth album.



#### Gliss Riffer

by Dan Deacon, out on 23 February (Domino)

Since 2012's transamerican epic, titled suitably enough, America, cult musician Dan Deacon is returning to more small-scale experimental ground with this album (by our count, his sixth), though don't expect a reduction of ambition. Gliss Riffer is customarily eccentric, with sounds piled on top of each other in a gloopy and delicious maelstrom where more is more. An electronica trifle if you will. Dig in.



#### **What Happens Next**

by Gang of Four, out on 2 March (Membran)

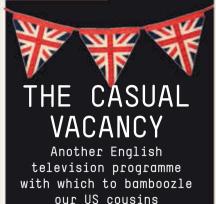
Although outspoken post-punk outfit Gang of Four is down to just a single original member from the line-up that started out in the Seventies, founding guitarist Andy Gill would surely pooh-pooh their demise - especially given that he has recruited The Kills' Alison Mosshart and Robbie Furze of The Big Pink to plug the holes in the group. By the sounds of this, their ninth studio album, they've lost none of their political vim, either.



#### Shadows in the Night

by Bob Dylan, out on 2 February (Columbia)

You may still be wading through all six discs (or some 139 tracks) of the recently released The Basement Tapes Complete, but do you think Dylan's hanging around for you to catch up? No sirree, er, Bob. In fact, he's releasing an album (his 36th!) of cover versions of classic Sinatra-sung tunes, such as Jacques Prévert's "Autumn Leaves" and Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Some Enchanted Evening" from South Pacific. Hats off.





As you know, for most of us Downton Abbey isn't so much popular melodrama as gritty social realism who isn't plaqued with thieving footmen and doesn't have a meddlesome dowager countess tucked away in the drawing room? but that hasn't stopped benighted American audiences thinking it's all super-quaint and delightful. Imagine our horror, therefore, to learn that a new three-part adaptation of Harry Potter author JK Rowling's grown-up novel
The Casual Vacancy is coming out this month, a co-production between the dear old Beeb and glossy American cable network HBO Vacancy stars Michael Gambon, Keeley Hawes and Rory Kinnear and takes place in the fictional town of Pagford, a cobbled English cranny that's probably a lot like the one you're reading this in right now. When parish councillor Barry Fairbrother (Kinnear) unexpectedly pops his clogs (we know, we're adorable), a fearsome power struggle begins, partly fuelled by a row over whether or not the local council estate (ie, commoners) should be reassigned to a neighbouring town. It's the kind of searing class war that does indeed keep us up at night, ranting in front of the hearth in our smoking jackets and monogrammed slippers. But remember, as far they're concerned: it's just cute English makebelieve. Let it be our quaint





Meet England's greatest loss to America since, well, America

Say hello to Carmen Ejogo. Now say goodbye. Brought up in London, the 41-year-old actress moved permanently to New York 14 years ago. Don't worry, though, she keeps a place in Ladbroke Grove, west London, just in case she gets homesick. Or the cravings get too bad. "I really miss great fish and chips, and really good bangers — you can't get them in New York."

This month, England's loss, and America's gain, is set to grow exponentially. Ejogo is about to star as Martin Luther King Jr's wife Coretta Scott King in Selma, the Oscarnominated film depicting the Alabama protest marches of the mid-Sixties and their aftermath. "I've played Coretta once before," she says of this daunting new role, "and she was still alive at the time so I had the privilege to meet her. She was this incredibly powerful, austere presence that you felt you kind of had to bow down to."

A former model and talented singer (check out her rave reviews for the recent remake of 1976's girl-group movie Sparkle), Ejogo has previously starred in

high-octane thrillers Alex Cross and The Purge: Anarchy. "I just like mixing it up," she explains, "that's what excites me. To be stuck in the same TV show for seven years would be the most awful thing."

Her next appearance will be alongside Ethan Hawke's homage to jazz trumpeter Chet Baker in Born To Be Blue, though later down the line she has action in her sights. "Let's give a girl a chance to do what the boys have been doing recently," she says, "like Robert Downey Jr in Iron Man. That would be the next frontier." We're certainly up for Ejogo giving the Hollywood big guns a run for their money. As long as she remembers to visit.

Selma is out 6 February



#### NEW LABOUR, NEW DANGER CONSERVATIVES, 1997

After Tony Blair created New Labour, the Tory team at M&C Saatchi hit back by hinting the party was "dangerous". It didn't work: Peter Mandelson had a bishop decry its satanic undertones, while Blair won by a landslide. "That poster was one of the most ineffective things we ever did," Jeremy Sinclair, M&C's creative boss. reflects of its impact.

LEAST

WORDS BY RACHEL FELLOWS | REX | GETTY





# BOARD STUPTD

THE MOST DISASTROUS RECENT ADS IN BRITISH POLITICS

There's an election coming and with it a raft of expensively crafted ideological messages from the big parties (plus the latest beer mat scribbles from Nigel Farage). In Mad Men & Bad Men: What Happened When British Politics Met Advertising, Sam Delaney traces the history of the close ties between admen and politicians. It can lead to a perfect alchemy of smooth message and slick delivery — adman Philip Gould virtually created New Labour — but it can go oh-so-wrong. Here, Delaney reveals five monumental misfires.

We can't go on like this. I'll cut the deficit, not the NHS.

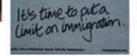
FUCK C

KTOE Read our plan for change at conservatives.com CHANGE



THE DAY THE TORY SUMS ADD UP LABOUR, 2005

A blog accused this poster. devised by a competition winner, of being anti-Semitic (Michael Howard and Oliver Letwin are Jewish). News teams camped outside Labour adman Trevor Beattie's house, assuming he made it. Beattie emailed Alastair Campbell for advice. "Tell them to fuck off," Campbell replied but accidentally sent it instead to Newsnight...



ARE YOU THINKING WHAT WE'RE THINKING? CONSERVATIVES, 2005

Michael Howard hired Aussie spin doctor Lynton Crosby to execute the "dog-whistle effect": posters designed to say one thing to the wider public while communicating a subtext to a smaller group. The Tories were accused of wooing BNP voters. "It was in bad taste," says Tory ad quru Jeremy Sinclair. Labour won a third term.



DON'T LET HIM TAKE BRITAIN BACK TO THE 1980S LABOUR, 2010

This poster, created by a Labour member, depicted Cameron as no-nonsense Ashes To Ashes TV cop Gene Hunt. What they forgot though was that Hunt was. in fact, a hugely popular antihero with the public. The Tories embraced it, responding with a similar poster under the headline Fire up the Quattro. It's time for change"



WE CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS... CONSERVATIVES, 2010

Critics lampooned this seeminaly airbrushed image. with Labour responding that Gordon Brown was building a foundation while Cameron was wearing one. Soon mydavidcameron.com sprang up, allowing users to add their own jocular headlines and quickly hit a quarter of a million visits. Agency Euro RSCG paid the price and the Tories re-employed the Saatchis soon after.



Mad Men & Bad Men: What Happened When British Politics Met Advertising by Sam Delanev is out on 5 February (Faber & Faber)



Baltasar Gracián may have been a 17th-century priest, but didn't sound like one. How To Use Your Enemies is a collection of his life advice, which ranges from Machiavellian ("Enemies are than friends to the fool") to the Mr Miyagian ("It's flies straight, but not one that twists and turns") and the men's magazine-ian ("Be free in spirit, passionate

about all that's fine, and never sin against your own good taste"). It's being published as part of a new series of 80 Little Black Classics, which marks Penguin's 80th birthday, and also features Herman Melville, Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde and Anton Chekhov. Each book runs to a total of just 64 pages because, as Gracián says: "What's good, if brief, is twice as good."\*



Penguin's Little Black Classics are available from 26 February



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# "IT'S NO SECRET THAT I WAS F\*\*\*ING AROUND WITH PSYCHEDELICS"

Savs Father John Misty (aka Josh Tillman aka Fleet Foxes' drummer aka an albino gorilla in a tree)

After some dense, constipated albums as J Tillman, 33-year-old Josh Tillman changed the name over the door to Father John Misty. Suddenly he was a showman and a troubadour, and his 2012 album Fear Fun was joyous, sexy and hilarious: a stand-out record of that year. Now, the one-time Fleet Foxes drummer is back with some new friends - strings, a mariachi band, more strings - and an ambitious, deeply personal album about love and misbehaviour, I Love You, Honeybear.

Esquire: You thought up Fear Fun sitting naked in a tree in Big Sur. How fully formed was the vision?

Father John Misty: It was like a cosmic-joke moment; a moment of clarity where I could articulate to myself that I was an albino gorilla in a tree. It's no secret that I was fucking around with psychedelics at the time, but it arrived fully formed. If it hadn't gone well, I'd be in a home because it was one of those moments: "What? Say that again!"

### ESQ: It was easy then?

FJM: Super-easy. Easy to write, easy to record. And it was just such a new experience. I'd never really made a record that had a beat on it [laughs], so in a primitive way it was a very gratifying experience.

ESQ: Apparently, Honeybear came to you when you were hallucinating in Joshua Tree National Park?

FJM: Yeah, that's when I heard the sound of the album. Just this huge sound. I just knew the songs had to be beautiful. So it was strings, and there are strings all over the album. Anything I write from here on out, it's going to be on the same continuum. ESQ: Are drugs important in the creative process?

FJM: At the time, I was still very dependent on externalities. But psychedelics, for me, is sort of like the current sacred cow that must die. ESQ: At one point weren't you getting high most days?

FJM: I haven't been smoking weed in

CONTEXT-**FREE EXTRACTS** FROM ESQUIRE'S FIII I **FATHER** JOHN MISTY INTERVIEW

### 23 MINS

'I've been thinkina a lot about excrement.

### 37 MINS

They would actually bring in the pastor's wife every Friday and she'd attempt to cast the demons out of me.

### 52 MINS

'So Charles climbs into the '69' casket to try to do some writing and he discovers that the voice of God is inside of the casket and God's name is Josh Tillman.

### 62 MINS

'I was really inspired by Yoko Ono's Grapefruit and Zen koans.

### 73 MINS

'It looks like it was done alcoholic eight-yearold.



a year or something. Weed is like oof, Jesus Christ. I took weed purely to terrorise myself; it just gave me pure dysphoria. It didn't mellow me at all. It didn't chill me out. I was probably putting myself at risk of having a schizophrenic breakdown.

ESQ: With Fear Fun, you played with a "Josh Tillman" persona. But this time, it's you, isn't it?

FJM: Fear Fun felt really honest to me, but it was really honest about things it's cool to be honest about. Like: [croons] "Smoking weed and having sex in a graveyard." And that was my life at that time. But when we were mixing this album and people were hearing it for the first time, I wanted a trapdoor to open up beneath me and take me away forever. I was mortified. It hit home for the first time: "Holy shit! This is very personal." ESQ: How's that going to impact on your famously exuberant live show? FJM: I don't know yet. I think I'm going to cry a lot more. Seriously, ESQ: You're writing a novel, you draw,

you make videos — do these give you something that music doesn't?

is out on

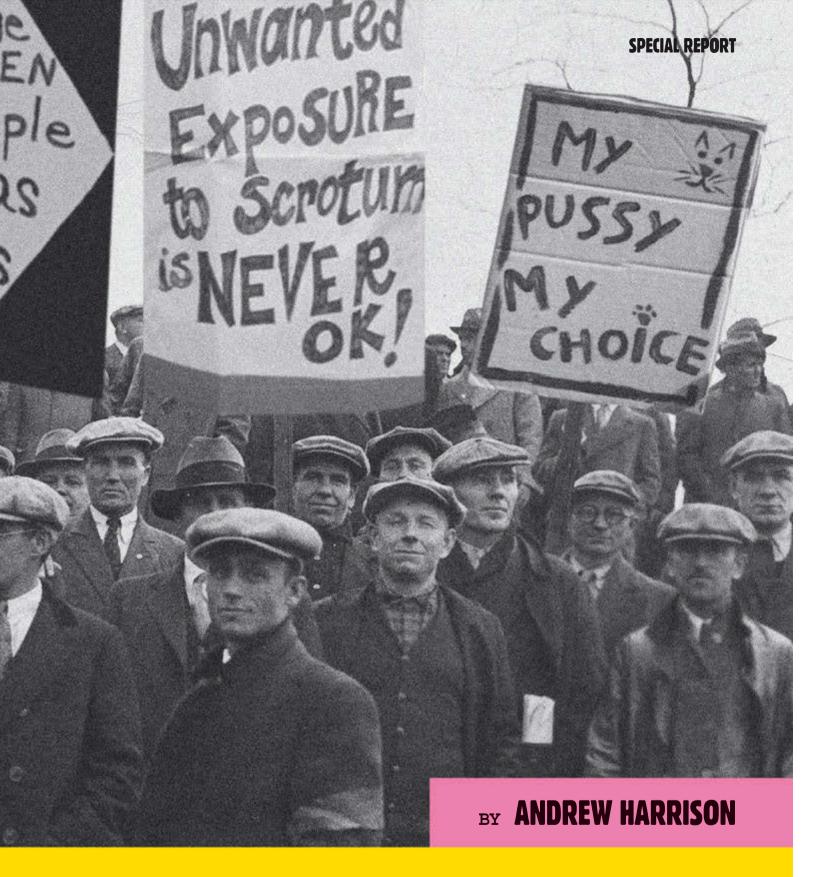
9 February

Culture

FJM: I think I'm a songwriter. I wrote a TV pilot that I've pitched to Amazon, IFC, Comedy Central. All of them turned it down, but I couldn't believe I got meetings with these places. It's called Pure Gold and it's about this washed-up country music duo that get wrapped up with the Korean mafia and the Korean mafia ends up getting wrapped up in the country music industry. It's kind of like if the Coen brothers turned their hand to The Dukes of Hazzard. I do these things, but songwriting is what I care about. I don't know how to justify it yet, but I have to write about myself. That's all I'm interested in.

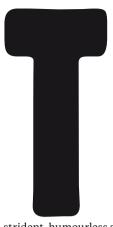


# HOW TO BE



# A FEMINIST

# **SPECIAL REPORT**



here are few things in life that don't make more sense in the context of a story from The Onion. Like this one, recommended to me by more than one emissary from the allegedly

strident, humourless and no-fun world of feminism: "Man Finally Put In Charge Of Struggling Feminist Movement."

"The feminist movement underwent a high-level shake-up last month," the story reads, "when 53-year-old management consultant Peter 'Buck' McGowan took over as new chief of the worldwide initiative for women's rights... 'All the feminist movement needed to do was bring on someone who had the balls to do something about this glass ceiling business,' said McGowan, who quickly closed the 23.5 per cent gender wage gap by 'making a few calls to the big boys upstairs'."

"In the world of gender identity and empowered female sexuality, it's all about who you know," says Buck, square-jawed and surrounded by adoring women in one of those slightly-too-photoshopped images which are *The Onion*'s trademark. "These ladies should have brought me on years ago."

Like all good satire, it gives you the real world with only the tiniest absurdist tweak. The hidden gag is that really we're all feminists now, men included — specifically the sort of thinking, self-questioning, liberal man who reads a site like *The Onion* and gets a joke like this. But are we?

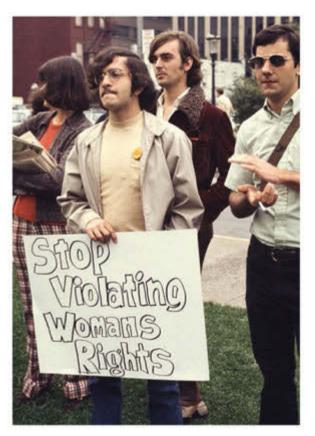
In some respects, yes. We've bought the arguments if not the T-shirt. We've accepted that there's a gender pay gap that makes no sense and an endemic unfairness to women in society (haven't we?) even if we can't agree what (if anything) to do about it. We hate the thought of our daughters and nieces growing up with limited life chances and the constant low-level intimidation of a banter-driven, rapey world of creatined-up, NekNominating dickheads who actually use words like "rapey".

We're starting to understand the gauntlet of catcalling idiocy that

the women we know go through when they're walking down the street, and wonder uncomfortably about when we might have done something like that ourselves in the past. We recoil from the sad shipwreck of laddism (it wasn't us, honest) and from woman-bullying creeps like comedian Dapper Laughs. We might fight shy of the F word itself—too posturing, too tryhard, too self-satisfied and identified with the Fun-Free Left for a guy to apply it to himself—but to all intents and purposes we're on the feminism bus.

And then you run up against Ched Evans and all the other spit-roasting, consequence-free footballers; the pick-up artists and the female-baiting Twitter scum; or the UniLad readers who use "bantz" as a license to be an arsehole — the kind of guys who say "smash that" and "kick her back doors in". Then there's the self-designated Men's Rights Activists who say they're standing up for fathers' access to their children and against male suicide and yadda yadda — but spend most of their time threatening sexual violence against the women who disagree with them. It becomes harder to avoid the conclusion that a lot of us are just irredeemable bullying wankers who dress up our cruelty with humour and keep getting away with it. Then you understand

Three men at a "reproductive rights" rally in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1974



why feminism, far from shutting up shop, its work done, is in rude health.

And it is. Revitalised by blogs and social media, driven by twentysomethings and with journalist Caitlin Moran's 2011 memoir *How To Be A Woman* as its gateway drug, feminism is arguably stronger than at any time since the Eighties. It may or may not be in a Fourth Wave to match the severe Second Wave of the Sixties and Seventies (demos, black-and-white judgments, neo-Marxism) and the hairclips-and-Riot Grrrl Third Wave of the Nineties.

Some of its priorities, like the Lose The Lads Mags campaign, seem a bit ridiculous (middle-shelf stroke mags are dying out of their own accord; you might as well campaign against home taping). Some of it can be kind of po-faced and one-note: website vagendamagazine.com's book A Zero Tolerance Guide To The Media got panned by some women for its inability to see an innocent pleasure if there was a sexist transgression to be denounced. And in its sectarian squabbling and enervating policing of language — do you know or care what intersectionality is? - it can be both baffling and draining to the outsider, female as well as male. But there's no doubt that for a huge group of young women, feminism is what's happening right now.

"Modern feminism," says Guardian columnist Suzanne Moore, "is punk rock for girls. It's incredibly exciting. It's not all about hating men, although it can be — the good bits, the fun bits." (She's joking.) "There's no denying that the man-hating bit is a stage you do go through. Sometimes I wish we didn't have to package feminism to make it more friendly.

"The uncomfortable thing about it is that it is about power, and that's hard for men. If someone is going to gain, then someone has to lose. You might lose some things that you've taken for granted, or you might have to step back. People are afraid of feminism because they think it's censorious. We need to say that feminism won't destroy your pleasure — it may enhance it.

"Among other things you may actually find yourself in equal relations with women who actually like sex. Isn't that better than having to force yourself on these reluctant girls? Wouldn't it be a healthier world for everyone if women were upfront about their desires, too? To me, feminism is about understanding that

# "WHAT'S A MICROAGGRESSION?"

A SHORT GLOSSARY OF TERMS FROM THE NEW FEMINISM

# **BECHDEL TEST**

Rough test to see if a book or movie contributes to gender bias. For instance, do two female characters in the story talk to one another about something other than a man? Fiendishly hard to pass but unfortunately no indicator of quality (Transformers: Age Of Extinction (2014) passes, Grand Budapest Hotel (2014) fails).

# "CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE"

Clarion call of online "justice warriors" who've turned conversation about various -isms into a game of "I'm More Oppressed Than You" Top Trumps.

# MICROAGGRESSION

From elite US colleges, this year's "check your privilege": low-level and often ham-fistedly well-intentioned talk which, oh dear, comes out sexist/racist ("You're very clever for a pretty girl"). Currently in the process of becoming ridiculous eg, "How dare you open a door for me, do you think I'm weak?"

# **POST-FEMINISM**

The notion that we no longer need feminism because all the problems have been solved, sexism is universally agreed to be "a bad thing" and women can be anything they like, from CEOs to pole dancers. Hotly contested, unsurprisingly.

# RAPE CULTURE

The argument that a culture that trivialises sexual violence or turns it into a joke makes rape more acceptable. Examples: a bantz-driven world that presents women as available 24/7; rape jokes and T-shirts; emphasising the "ruined careers" of convicted rapist sportsmen; or the tiny number of false rape accusations over the ones that actually happen. It doesn't mean you are a rapist.

# **FOURTH-WAVE FEMINISM**

The post-post-post-feminism wave we're in now, characterised by Pussy Riot, SlutWalks, digital initiatives like vagendamagazine.com and The Everyday Sexism Project, Caitlin Moran's How To Be A Woman and a hell of a lot of debate/argument on social media.

# **VICTIM BLAMING**

Self-explanatory: from "She shouldn't have worn that skirt/got drunk" to "She shouldn't have put herself on Twitter." Beware the man who uses phrases such as "Fair game".



# SIR PATRICK STEWART

Having watched his father hit his mother, the actor promotes campaigns to end domestic violence. And you can't argue with the man who ran both the USS Enterprise and the X-Men, can you?

ROBERT WEBB
The actor has written humorous think-pieces on feminism, and knows Peep Show is funny because it's about being stuck between the two versions of manhood. PC guys and wa-hey unparlable Mark and Tot are published both superlads Mark and Jez are rubbish at both.

# TONY PORTER

are emasculated weeds, show them this New York academic's TED talk "A Call To Hen". He works against sexual violence with the army and navy — and he is nobody's wimp.

# JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT

Treats feminism like common sense.

Can carry an action role — <u>Inception</u> (2010),

<u>Looper</u> (2012) — without dicklehness. Recent
video appeal "What does feminism mean
to you?" went down a storm.

# JON HAMM

Don Draper is fotional. Hamm often talks about Draper's failings, speaks out about rape prevention and raising children right. But he's a feminist so that means he must be a self-hating beta male with no balls.

# **DON'T BE LIKE** THESE CLOWNS

# DAPPER LAUGHS

A cry-baby "comic character" whose sleazy antics creeped everyone out except a hopeless core of benterlope fanboys. Moral: being a dick then saying "But it was a JOKE!" is not going to wash.

# NIGEL FARAGE

There are many reasons to avoid the car-coated Mr Toad of politics but his party's dodgy Fifties attitude to women will do. His response: "What do you want me to do? Go and sell flowers?"

## VLADIMIR PUTIN

The whole shirtless, bear-wrestling, judo-and-Formula-1 thing goes over well in confused, resentful Russia. But do you really want to emulate the human equivalent of a birthday card to a 12-year-old boy?

### ROBIN THICKE

The David Brent of gropey disco whose career pancaked because the sentiments

# DON DRAPER

hollow man, he finds the only industry that will tolerate him — advertising — and tries (and fails) to drink and screw the misery away. He's the male crisis on legs.



# **HEROES & VILLAINS**

ROLE MODELS FOR THE FEMINIST MAN - PLUS SOME WALKING CAUTIONARY TALES

the stereotypes and roles that women and men labour under are social. And that means we can change them."

ut do we want to?
I think we do.
I think men want
to be better men
— not just by
reaching the
pathetically low
bar of, "Well, at
least I'm not Keith
Lemon" and

expecting a medal for it, but by making sure that the ideals of fairness that we all grew up with get full expression. We just don't want to sign up for a joyless world where we're forever checking our privilege and no-one is ever allowed to fancy anyone. But we don't want to win a rigged game, either. It's unmanly.

The problem is, how do you start to fix this stuff without being cast as what Godfrey Bloom — the clownish former Ukip Euro MP who thinks women who don't clean behind the fridge are "sluts" — called "the slightly, effete politically correct chaps who get sand kicked in their face on the beach"? For all its energy and basic rightness, the modern feminist landscape is bewilderingly difficult to navigate.

Here's how utterly confusing it is. If (God help you) you join any online debates and find yourself in an honest disagreement with a woman then you'll probably be accused of mansplaining. This once-useful term - meaning condescendingly to explain to a woman what she already knows - has degenerated until it appears to mean differing with a woman on any subject at all. Or maybe you've jumped in on the conversation about our society's hopeless record on prosecuting rape by pointing out that you and every man you know is revolted by the very idea and would never do anything like that. You've committed another newbie faux pas and you'll meet another sarcastic conversationcloser so ingrained that it's become a Twitter hashtag: #NotAllMen.

Out in the actual, physical world it's no less perplexing. If Beyoncé takes the stage in a corset and runs round like a sexual whirlwind, that's feminism — we know this because she's got a giant neon sign behind her that reads FEMINISM. But if a man looks at a photo of a woman in a corset in a magazine, that's



disgusting objectification and you should feel really bad about it. Meanwhile, any Hollywood actor or politician can don a T-shirt and magically be acclaimed as a feminist without doing much else at all.

If feminism is whatever a woman says it is, does it become meaningless? Pole dancers: empowered women making their own choices or just strippers after a rebrand? How come we are the villains when the agencies that make girls think the worst about themselves are women's magazines and media? What the hell is this "rape culture" anyway? These are thoughts to do your head in. Who would want to be a male feminist when so many participants are less interested in solving gender inequality than in raging about how crap men are? But this is probably my solutions-oriented male brain trying to take charge of the struggling feminist movement. I need to check my privilege.

So I spoke to a variety of women, from columnists to campaigners to random Jane Publics about this. None of them thought feminism meant some sort of revenge on men. All of them considered it perfectly possible for a man to be a feminist

Times columnist Caitlin Moran's book How To Be A Woman is a set text of the new feminism — and a bestseller without losing what makes us men (unless you define feminism in the most extreme Andrea Dworkin-style terms). And several of them noted the weird paradox at the centre of the new feminism. All the conversation is among women — but things aren't going to change until men start talking about them, too. Part of that entails recognising that far from winning hands-down in the current gender settlement, men get a different kind of crappy deal.

My friend Lee Chalmers is a life

and development coach who has worked with the London and Chicago Business Schools. She's a former vice-chair of old-school women's rights organisation the Fawcett Society, who were behind those "This Is What a Feminist Looks Like" T-shirts, and a no-bullshit Scot, She's not convinced that modern men really do want to change ("Once you get out of that London, Guardian, arts bubble that most journalists inhabit, you find that loads of men across the country are really happy with inequality"). But she gets at least part of what makes men tick. She's about to start work on a book about feminism for men and she's thinking of calling it Can I Like Boobs and Still Be a Feminist?

"A lot of the corporate world is still about strip clubs and drinking," she explains. "You play along or you don't progress. And the women have to go. too, or they don't get the business either." She describes all the ways the current set-up forces men into boxes: the execs who want to spend more time with their kids but can't because they'll be perceived as weak; the burnt-out achievers on their third or fourth wives because they never learned how to relate to women; the guy who'd scheduled an antenatal appointment in his diary only for his boss to put in a meeting instead because "you don't want to go to that".

"Gender inequality hurts men, too, and I'd like to see a male feminist movement take this stuff on," she says. "That's the next frontier of feminism. If we could somehow tweak this whole thing so that it's a brave thing for men to do, then it would change things. Men like to be brave, so let's make it something you have to fight for."

Such as? Call out sexist behaviour when you hear it, Lee suggests. Don't laugh at a crap joke about a woman's tits or how stupid she is. Don't talk over women — listen to them. Don't

# FOR ALL ITS ENERGY AND BASIC RIGHTNESS, THE MODERN FEMINIST LANDSCAPE IS BEWILDERINGLY DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE



follow the blokey herd. Ask yourself if it's really enough to act in a fair and non-sexist way if you're not looking outside yourself to redress the balance, too. "It's hard but it's never going to change unless men change it. Actually," she says, "I don't think it's a woman's job to tell men what they should do. When men start working it out, that's when we'll start to get somewhere."

And there is no getting around it. The things we are going to have to work out get to the heart of what it means to be a man. They are, in the jargon, very triggering. Take the argument that we live in a rape culture designed to encourage the abuse of women. Your stomach turns — of course it does. Who could possibly think like that? And then you go on Twitter.

In 2013, the journalist and feminist writer Caroline Criado-Perez launched a modest campaign to ensure that the face of at least one woman (apart from the Queen) would remain on a British banknote when the Bank of England refreshed the designs. Her reward for this innocuous demand was a ludicrous and graphically violent campaign of rape and death threats on Twitter which resulted in the jailing of three people, one a woman. (One tweet read: "I've only just got out of prison and would happily do more time to see you berried!!")

"It wasn't the stereotypical powerless losers with no life of their own," she tells me. "They weren't sitting in their underpants in their mums' basements. They were men with families and businesses. They seem normal and yet they're saying

these awful things to women online. It was so clearly a product of fear and it highlighted how ingrained misogyny is. It's frightening."

The rape culture argument, she says, is not that all men are potential sexual assailants, but that a society which presents women as available objects - in advertising, pop culture and the workplace - implies that they're, so to speak, there for the taking in any context. "It's about not treating a woman as a human being," Criado-Perez says. "It's about only being interested in what you want. If you only have sexy women in magazines, and you have Page Three and lapdancing and paying for sex, then it's all on a spectrum of not seeing a woman as a person. She's an object, a non-person. When men are brought up like that, it's hard to accept that women might not be there purely for their sexual pleasure."

But if a sexy Beyoncé video is #feminism while a cheesecake shoot in a magazine constitutes rape culture, is it any wonder that men today are thoroughly confused about how they are meant to act? "I love the fact that Beyoncé is calling herself a feminist," Criado-Perez counters. "The problem isn't her sexy dancing—it's the fact that most women's options are narrowed so that being sexual is all that's available to them.

"So one thing that men can do about it is try to increase women's options, at work and home and everywhere," she says. "It's about more than just saying 'I am a feminist' and carrying on as you did before; it's about what you do, not what you call yourself. Really. It's just about not being a dick..."

Beyoncé singing "Flawless" at the MTV Video Music awards last year. Is this what a feminist looks like?

erhaps it is.
Perhaps "don't
be a dick" is the
governing principle
we can take to
heart, an idea that
can turn this thing
from an exercise in
beating yourself up
— look at me,

ladies, look how righteous I am — into something useful to live by. It is, in fact, a more practical, less Hollywood version of the HeForShe campaign that actress Emma Watson launched at the UN recently. It is the idea that standing up against inequality and unfairness is what a real man does.

It is not going to please everybody. Like all fundamentalisms, the loudest extremes in this debate - be they merciless radical feminists of the "I Bathe In Male Tears" persuasion, or men's rights throwbacks who think that anyone who's trying to change his behaviour is a pathetic beta male offer consistency and the recreational comforts of righteous anger. Like a bottle of Sex Panther, 60 per cent of the time their analysis works every time. Whatever the question, the answer is always the same: "It's the patriarchy, stupid", or "Women are naturally inferior", or "All men are rapists", or "Shut up, love, it's only banter." But these are not the people you're talking to. You're talking to the better side of yourself.

We don't have to be 100 per cent consistent. We just have to keep moving in the right direction. If a woman can like shoes and a Diet Coke ad and Ryan Gosling and still be a feminist, then a man can enjoy football and the company of men and, yes, Jennifer Lawrence in a state of undress - provided she's OK with the taking and distribution of the image and some sleaze hasn't hacked it out of her iCloud - and be a feminist, too. We're not programmed by what we read. "You don't have to be sycophantic about it," says Suzanne Moore. "All you need to do is walk alongside us. Listen. Be our mate."

One of the best bits of advice I ever got came from a friend's father, a man with a rocky life and plenty of issues. He said that every man must accept that he's got a monster inside him. Your job is to keep that monster down and be a better man. Men like a struggle, so here's ours. Don't be a dick, and don't let your friends be dicks, either. How hard can it be?

# MALE FEMINISM:

OK, YOU'RE NOT CATCALLING OR GROPING - THAT'S A GIVEN. HERE ARE 10 MORE MOVES FOR THE MANLY FEMINIST

# MAN UP — AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT SOUNDING WEIRD

If your friends are bantzing it up about a female colleague or sleazing a woman, call them on it. It's the only way this stuff is going to change. Just try to make sure you don't open with the line, "Not cool, bro."

# TRY LISTENING

Z TO WOMEN
The easiest one. At work, at home, try shutting up for a bit. And not in a "yes, dear" way. It's incredibly liberating. Also, fight with every fibre of your being not to complain about "magging".

# 3 PICK YOUR JOKES WITH CARE

Gags about tits, women being stupid, slags, inexpert drivers. they're not especially funny, are they? There is a reason for this. If you're still telling them, you might want to work on your material.

# A DON'T GO TO

What is the fucking matter with you? You are not in The Wolf Of Wall Street and you wouldn't even want to be. "Titty bars" are for men who never meet a woman who wants to be naked in front of them, anyway.

# 5 DON'T KEEP TAKING CHARGE The male curse; we always

take the lead at work, at home or anywhere does not make you a doormat, a pussy or a big Jessie. Also, don't say "pussy".

# 6 DO HALF OF THE HOUSEWORK

sharing yours (drains, fuses, fixing the sodding Wi-Fi router) and then who's laughing, eh?

# DON'T MAKE WOMEN UNCOMFORTABLE WITH YOUR PRESENCE

Sounds a bit wet but hear us out. Don't plank yourself next to a lone woman on a train if there are other seats. If on a dark street, cross the road. You know you're not a rapist. She doesn't.

# **EMPLOY AND PROMOTE** WOMEN WHENEVER YOU CAN

"But what if she hasn't got the experience?" How else is she going to get it? "But she might get pregnant!" Think about it for a moment: how else do you think you got here?

# **RAISE KIDS, NOT**

BOYS AND GIRLS
Don't only tell your daughter she's beautiful, or only tell your son he's clever. Tell them OK, they'll still gravitate to Disney princesses and Minecraft but at least that won't be all they grow up on.

# DON'T PRETEND

As the great Kurt Vonnegut you pretend to be."





MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR BORN: ATLANTA, GEORGIA DAVID OYELOWO BORN: OXFORD, ENGLAND

PRESIDENT LYNDON B JOHNSON BORN: STONEWALL, TEXAS

# PLAYING FOR AMERICA



TOM WILKINSON Born: Leeds, England GOVERNOR GEORGE WALLACE BORN: CLIO, ALABAMA

TIM ROTH Born: London, England

IN THE NEW CIVIL RIGHTS DRAMA SELMA, AT CINEMAS THIS MONTH, THE THREE CENTRAL CHARACTERS — EACH IN HIS WAY AN ICONIC AMERICAN FIGURE — ARE ALL PLAYED BY BRITISH ACTORS: DAVID OYELOWO AS MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR; TOM WILKINSON AS PRESIDENT LYNDON B JOHNSON; AND TIM ROTH AS INFAMOUS ALABAMA GOVERNOR GEORGE WALLACE. IT'S A NOBLE TRADITION: FROM CARY GRANT TO TOM HARDY, BRITS HAVE EXCELLED AT PLAYING YANKS. BUT WHY ARE WE SO GOOD AT IT, AND HOW COME WE'RE SO RARELY WILLING TO RETURN THE COMPLIMENT BY CASTING THEM AS US?

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# **DAVID THOMSON INVESTIGATES**

here have always been English actors thriving in American films and at the Oscars this year you may hear a lot of Benedict Cumberbatch, Eddie Redmayne and Timothy Spall being interviewed on the red carpet, or even giving a wry but heartfelt speech of thanks. Americans still love the way Brits speak, not just the sound of their voice, but their rather laconic and ironic touch with sentiment or sincerity. If you go back to Hitchcock's North by Northwest (1959), which is as American as Mount Rushmore, the sunbaked prairies, crop-dusting planes where no

crops grow, you'll note that both the hero and villain (Cary Grant and James Mason) are not just English to listen to, but English with butter, jam and cream, like a suave Cornish tea. They seem to be playing Americans, but the system didn't worry about the gap because it trusted that Middle America loved hearing smart limeys talk.

In their different ways, Grant and Mason crossed over to the US. It remains a mystery as to what Grant did with his voice after he abandoned Archie Leach. It's almost certain that he had sounded like a West Country boy, born and raised in Bristol, and yet by the time he was 30 there he was on screen, chatting with Mae West, Marlene Dietrich and Katharine Hepburn and seeming at home. As for Mason, I don't think he ever messed with his voice after he had found the recipe for superiority, allure and elocution. So he simply asserts that he is American as Dr Quinada in Caught (1949); as Norman Maine in A Star is Born (1954); and Ed Avery in Bigger Than Life (1956). In Some Like it Hot (1959), where Tony Curtis's rascal character does a Cary Grant impersonation to seduce Marilyn Monroe, the infuriated Jack Lemmon tells him, "Nobody talks like that!" And I suppose they don't, or not unless they have found the need to talk in a way that won't trouble Americans too much. I was born and raised in south London, but have been a resident in San Francisco for more than 30 years, so I'm sensitive to this dilemma: or is it best approached as an opportunity?

But in 2014, I was struck again by the puzzle when I started to watch a new television series, *The Affair*. It's summer on Long Island and a New York family (parents and four children), have gone for a holiday, staying at the wife's parents' home in Montauk at the eastern tip of the island. The man in the family, Noah, is a novelist, struggling to write his second book and pay for the brood. Well, he meets a waitress on the island, and she's attractive, sad and a bad risk. She's a woman who has lived all her life on Long Island. They fall in love. The couple in *The Affair* are played by Dominic West and Ruth Wilson. They're pretty good; I'm not sure that they aren't better than the series deserves. But Dominic West was born in Sheffield, while Ruth Wilson comes from Surrey.

I'd seen plenty of West before, but Ms Wilson was new to me — did I sleep through The Lone Ranger (2013)? — until I learned that she's the anguished, Londonish voice of Tom Hardy's wife on the carphone in Locke (2013). She's done a lot of theatre in England but I hadn't seen that. All I knew was that she sounded like a young woman from New York State, with a voice that seemed insinuating, beseeching but tough (by turns), not to mention her rare mouth. I know, we're not supposed to mention an actor's particularities, but what are we meant to look at? And how can Ruth Wilson act without letting her mouth move? Then, in a promo for The Affair, I happened to see her being interviewed, talking about her character Alison, and her voice was just what I'd have expected from south London and the suburbs south of the city: not quite proper, somewhere between harsh, lazy and whiny, just like the voice I grew up with. But then the promo cut away to a scene from the new series and she was once again a plausible Montauk outcast.

It was Wilson's sly naturalness that impressed me. She wasn't straining after the US accent in the way Marlon Brando was reaching to sound haughty and English in *Burn!* (1969) and *Mutiny on the* 

Bounty (1962). In the latter, he played First Lieutenant Fletcher Christian as if he might have learned the aristocratic English drawl from Berlitz records. As soon as I noted The Affair, I remembered the Deep South of 12 Years a Slave stars three British actors (Chiwetel Ejiofor and Michael Fassbender plus Cumberbatch). I realised that the wife in Gone Girl (2014) is Rosamund Pike (born in Hammersmith). In Selma, Martin Luther King, Jr is played by David Oyelowo (born in Oxford), wife Coretta Scott King by Carmen Ojogo (Kensington), President Lyndon B Johnson by Tom Wilkinson (Leeds) and Alabama Governor George Wallace by Tim Roth (London). Meanwhile on television, Damian Lewis has been a US marine in Homeland, and Idris Elba a Baltimore drug dealer — alongside Dominic West again, as a local cop — in *The Wire*. Then there is Tom Hardy in *The Drop* (2014), playing a beaten down, none-too-bright Brooklyn barman so that he fit in as suitable company for his boss James Gandolfini. Of course, Hardy is a wonder: he's from Hammersmith, too, but he did a melodious, hushed, Welsh voice for Locke, and in Lawless (2012) he is a Virginian, back-country moonshiner who seems embedded in the smoky burr of the place. This acting is fit to be put beside Daniel Day-Lewis in The Crucible (1996) and There Will be Blood (2007) — before

# HOW MANY AMERICAN ACTORS ARE THERE WHO CAN DO FOOLPROOF ENGLISH ACCENTS?

he won every bit of esteem and approval as President Lincoln himself. As Lincoln (2012) made clear, Day-Lewis isn't just a master actor but a vocal chameleon. Yet it's remarkable that the American acting community stood by and let a Brit play that hallowed part (in fact, Day-Lewis was second choice after the original casting of Liam Neeson fell through). Suppose a new movie was proposed (yet again) on Churchill in his finest hour. Would Dustin Hoffman, Jack Nicholson or Robert Duvall have the nerve to do it? I know Duvall did Stalin once, and he was Dr Watson decades ago — in The Seven-Per-Cent Solution (1976) — with a rather stilted accent. I don't think Britain would welcome the casting, and I doubt the best US actors could be as smooth with the role's voice as Ruth Wilson or Tom Hardy are with theirs.

How many American actors are there who can do foolproof English accents, let alone voices as local as Hardy manages in *The Drop* or *Lawless?* I can think of Gillian Anderson in *The Fall*; that's good, if indeterminate. Of course, Anderson has spent a lot of time in Britain lately, so she's had the chance to learn. But I saw her last year as Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (I must admit I thought it was a wretched production at the Young Vic, despite receiving so much praise in London), and her Southern voice >



- ROSAMUND PIKE, FROM HAMMERSMITH, PLAYED A
  AMY DUNNE, FROM NEW YORK CITY, IN GONE GIRL
- TOM HARDY, FROM HAMMERSMITH, PLAYED V
  BOB SAGINOWSKI, FROM BROOKLYN, IN THE DROP
- IDRIS ELBA, FROM HACKNEY, AND DOMINIC WEST, FROM SHEFFIELD, PLAYED STRINGER BELL AND JIMMY MCNULTY, FROM BALTIMORE, IN <u>THE WIRE</u>
- DANIEL DAY-LEWIS, FROM GREENWICH, PLAYED ABRAHAM LINCOLN, FROM KENTUCKY, IN <u>Lincoln</u>





VIVIEN LEIGH FROM ROEHAMPTON, PLAYED A
BLANCHE DUBOIS, FROM NEW ORLEANS, IN <u>A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE</u>

A ANTHONY HOPKINS. FROM PORT TALBOT, PLAYED
HANNIBAL LECTER, FROM BALTIMORE, IN THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

OAMIAN LEWIS, FROM ST JOHN'S WOOD, PLAYED NICHOLAS BRODY, FROM LANGLEY, VIRGINIA, IN <u>HOMELAND</u>





had seemed overdone there, or not nearly as touching or authentic as Vivien Leigh in the 1951 movie of *Streetcar* (Leigh's own voice was one she might have purchased at Harrods). I'm not forgetting Meryl Streep as Mrs Thatcher in *The Iron Lady* (2011) — very close — but I never believed the way Maggie talked in the first place.



think many actors might note there is a marked difference in attitudes to voice in theatrical training. In British drama schools, there is a liberty or ease with ways of speaking. Accent, dialect and local voices come with the British repertoire, along with fencing, dance, how to stand and carry yourself. From the outset, there is a stress on being ready (and eager) to pretend. An actor of the generation and confident daring that bred Laurence Olivier allowed him to do [restaurant manager George] Hurstwood in the film of Carrie (1952), the father in Long Day's Journey Into Night (ITV, 1962) and Big Daddy in a Granada TV production of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof in 1976. More daring

still, without ever altering his voice, Richard Burton was George in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf (1966). He simply presented himself as American, and dared us to doubt it. But that was paddling at the edges of a sea that another Welshman, Anthony Hopkins, would plunge into like a happy seal. There was a time when Hopkins was Port Talbot and the National Theatre in terms of voice, but Hannibal Lecter from Silence of the Lambs (1991) freed him. That doctor was utterly American, and he would be followed by parts in Legends of the Fall (1994), Nixon (1995) and All the King's Men (2006), without a hint of awkwardness or shame.

Is that guiltless assurance getting close to the secret? In the years I'm talking about — more or less since sound came to movies — the education of actors in the US has been pledged to authenticity and psychological truth. Americans learn to speak English and they cannot shrug that heritage away. But they are self-conscious or proud about the way their English is different. There is even a kind of patriotism, or manliness, in adhering to your given voice. The way of acting that is labelled the Method, Actors Studio, or Stanislavski, believes in an actor finding himself in a part. So, perhaps it is a test of honour to stay loyal to your own voice because it is your identity.

In saying that, I am close to a curious insight or recollection. When I was growing up in England as a child, it was second nature for kids to start doing funny voices. It was a lark and a way of making fun of the local voices we heard, Oxbridge accents, and the sheer elasticity of voice. In the Fifties, at my school, most kids did Goon Show characters - Neddie Seagoon, Eccles, Grytpype-Thynne, Bluebottle — and so on. I think it was in part an escape from shyness. At the heart of that great show was Peter Sellers, an actor whose roots were in radio and the mastery he had of his own voice, even to the extent of leaving us all (plus himself) uncertain who Sellers really was. In just a few years, he went from being very English to just about anything: so, in Dr Strangelove (1964), he was an RAF officer, the US president and a Germanic mastermind. The voices were maybe a touch crude but Sellers was the swiftest mimic you ever heard. By the time he did Lolita (1962), his Clare Quilty was unerringly American.

Whereas, it seems to me, kids in America are not quite so inclined to try funny voices. And if they do risk it, they seem to lack the British pleasure in mimicry, no to mention the skill with it. This is very odd in that to live in America now is to be exposed to a remarkable range in the ways of speaking English. It would appear to be a fertile breeding ground for would-be actors. Brando seemed aware of that, and tickled by it. He enjoyed voices, so after his first impact as a Method American — epitomised in *Streetcar* and *On the Waterfront* (1954) — he collected voices the way Olivier collected false noses. He did Napoleon, a guy from Okinawa, a German officer, an Italian-

American, and by the time he made *The Missouri Breaks* (1976), he gave his character an anthology of voices within the one film. He was good at it, and he liked to impersonate people over the telephone, but his English accent never quite rang true (in the way no one noticed Damian Lewis was English in TV series *Homeland*). And there are other great American actors who seem to regard such an attempt as heresy or ridiculous: Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, Sean Penn [see interview on page 176] — I don't think there's a single English role to be found in all of their combined credits.

At the age of 73, I have now lived far longer in the United States than I did in England. Yet, I am lucky enough to have English children and American, and to be teased by all of them because they think I sound as if I come from the wrong side of the Atlantic. I can't say this is under control, though I am conscious how, over the years, I may have come to write American, and not simply English. My model in this, as in other things, was Alistair Cooke. By the time I first encountered Cooke, in the Fifties, listening with increasing pleasure to his *Letter from America* on BBC radio, the man born and raised in Lancashire had become American. The charm of *Letter* was the ease, the humour and the intelligence in his American voice.

# WOULD DUSTIN HOFFMAN OR JACK NICHOLSON HAVE THE NERVE TO DO CHURCHILL?

He sounded like an educated East Coaster who took care of his grammar and his facts, spoke as one who cherished radio's intimacy, and saw no reason why a good-natured Englishman shouldn't understand the way an American thought and felt. As I grew up, that seemed a valuable ideal: I liked the idea of the special relationship between the two countries and I suppose that Cooke and I in our different ways tried to live it out.

I knew him a little in his last decade, and I watched once in San Francisco as he recorded a Letter from America. We talked about voice and he shared my feeling: that he had always talked exactly the same way: naturally, correctly and in an attempt to be interesting and eloquent, so that people would listen. He hadn't noticed his voice shift. Maybe it all speaks to a deep love of Americana that is felt by some British people, and a feeling that our language can be written and spoken with benefit to us all. It's still a bit of a mystery, but when you hear Benedict Cumberbatch (that name makes all Americans smile; the knighthood will push him into Wodehouse country), simply doing American and rural Oklahoma, too, in August: Osage County (2013), you have to wonder what it says about us all that a fine young American actor (you name him) could not, and would not, dare to do south London, Liverpool or Port Talbot.



# The storyteller

Andrew O'Hagan is among Britain's best writers of fact and fiction — and (of course!) an editor-at-large of this magazine. Overleaf, exclusively for Esquire, O'Hagan publishes a searing new memoir of his father, and, on page 164, talks about his latest novel,

The Illuminations

Portrait by Dan Burn-Forti

# **Anonymous**

A Memoir by **Andrew O'Hagan** 

hen I was very young, my father swore me to a secrecy that still applies. He wasn't one of life's bigger men and he didn't have much influence, but he influenced us, and I still possess an irrational sense of loyalty to his version of what his life was all about, though it was our lives, too. Writing is often the act of pouring fresh sense on an old problem, but families are not always built to welcome that, and mine was crumbling from the start.

I once wrote a novel called *Our Fathers* in which a man is so drunk he falls down in the snow. He lies there all night, and, when the police come, they have to bring scissors because his hair is frozen to the road. When my father read this, he called me up and I could feel him smilling down the line. "You've got some imagination," he said, and he meant it as a compliment and I was happy to take it. (We were friends by then.) But the drunk man in that work of fiction was nobody but him, drawn from a fierce, cold night in my Scottish past. It was almost impressive the way he tried to disown it, but he must have known, however quietly,

that the secrets of our house couldn't be his forever.

It was Evelyn Waugh who said that when a writer is born into a family, then the family is finished. But it's not really that the family is finished: it's the group lie that is done for. Other members might stick to it, but the writer won't, not if he's any good. Even as a child, I was forever questioning the official version of history. My father was an alcoholic, a hopeless one, and every area of our upbringing hinged on his abuse of drink, and the aftermath of his sobriety, which saw a kind of holy narcissism replace his thirst. But first — the drink. I hear the clink of whisky bottles every time I imagine the first house I grew up in. He would hide them and my brothers and I would find them while playing in the cupboard under the stairs. He drank to oblivion, and now that I'm past the age at which he finally got sober, I see that the drinking itself was a brutal part of a Glasgow childhood in which he had no father and a mother who could barely stomach him. She never showed affection to him in front of us, and was a hard Catholic, barely suppressing her dislikes, while clearly still recovering from her own brutal marriage. By the time we were living with his problem, my father was spending everything on booze. He worked as a joiner, and, at that time, the trade was full of drunks, and I can still see them at a building site in Paisley, pulling half-bottles of whisky from their nail bags at 10 in the morning.

My mother had four boys to this man and always loved him. She didn't know how to handle him and she couldn't change him, and over the years she got used to punishing us, without realising it, for all his

"I once wrote about a man so drunk he fell asleep in the snow and his hair froze.
'You've got some imagination,' my father said"

criminal neglect of her. My father had charisma - he was good-looking and outrageous and could winnow a laugh from a dead priest - but he just wasn't built ever to care about other people except as an occasional for his own glory. He would help people so long as it made him feel better and look better, but he knew nothing about family love or the almost selfless dedication to a little community of wellbeing. Like many of us who drink, he was actually a loner: the world made sense to him with fewer people around. After a particularly bad binge, he ended up in a psychiatric hospital in Dumfries called The Crichton. I remember going to see him there, I was no more that eight years old, and he was sitting up in bed in striped pyjamas. He had rosary beads by the bed and a glass of barley water. "I don't want a drink," he said, and his eyes were full of determined fibs and possibly hope. Then he added something that I'm sure I'll remember until my own lights go out. "But I don't want to come home, either."

His car was always being found abandoned. He'd spend a night in the

cells, or end up at the house in Glasgow of my mother's sister, another heavy drinker with charisma and private pain who seemed in the Seventies to live in a permanent state of song. The storytelling started early with me, and I remember writing a story in my News Book in Primary Three where I told of how my father had staggered across the living room and fallen over a pouf. I couldn't understand why Mrs Docherty the teacher was blushing and why she ripped the page out of my jotter. Dad was always disappearing to England. Even today, about 40 years on, I can't hear the word "Carlisle" without imagining a series of sodium lights in the drizzling rain with my father stumbling below them in his working clothes, for that's how I imagined him in my youth, a vagrant in England, lost under a foreign sky and estranged from all the comforts we tried to offer him.

He'd sometimes bring a dog home from those trips. They were always called Lucky or Bob or Butch or something he'd thought of as he poured over the border, and he knew my mother hated dogs and that his boys felt doubly abandoned by the other dogs and him, but still he would bring them and pretend that life was going to be new. I can still recall him coming into my bedroom with a tiny brown puppy and putting it on my pillow before climbing under the covers with me to fall asleep in a snoring miasma of Old Spice and whisky. The dog, of course, peed the bed and the house woke up next morning to a shouting match to beat them all. After he fucked off to another job or a pub that existed beyond the very end of his tether,

my mother would mournfully take the dog to a pet shop in a town up the coast, and leave it there.

One alcoholic generation in my family led to another, and, looking back at the records, you observe — on both sides of my family — a litany of breakdowns, arrests, suicides and hospitals. The records for parish relief in Glasgow tell a story of the O'Hagans that is too deep for tears, but I always hoped my father might escape it by meeting the people who knew how to capitalise on his charisma. And the way he did that was to become a kind of lieutenant in Alcoholics Anonymous. He opened a meeting in our Ayrshire town and one of my brothers, who was good at art, painted little slogans onto plywood and he put them around a room in the social work department: "One day at a time", "Easy does it but do it", "Just for today", "Let it begin with me".

He came into my bedroom one evening and asked me what I was doing.

By that time, we were living in an attached house in a borstal, where my father was the janitor, and my parents' marriage was finally coming apart. It was dark and damp, that place, and being in the bedroom was like being at the outer edge of optimism, where goodness and happiness were proscribed by a threat much bigger than my dad's problem. Basically, my parents both had nervous breakdowns at the same time, and his reaching out for AA leadership was, at the time, merely another version of his mania and his need to heighten himself. I told him I was reading a book and he looked at it before asking if I needed the leather case I had on the bed. (It was a Christmas present. I was gathering papers and wanted one for school.) "You could give it to me," he said, "for my literature." He left the room and came back with something called The Big Book and other AA tomes and leaflets and reports that he had pored over. "Literature," he said. And I remember leaving my childhood behind as I emptied the bag and gave it to him.

He didn't drink again for 30 years. For a while, before my parents split, we used to spend Hogmanay at an AA convention in another town. All the former alcoholics would be there with their families and the tables were covered in stubby bottles of orangeade, Red Kola and cream soda, with crisps on paper plates, while the women danced. I have a photograph of myself at one of

those evenings, with my friend, who later struggled with heroin. I have a yearning sometimes to find those men who I knew back then, and to ask each of them what it was like, and did they feel the rogue gene had come down to them? I love male company in a lather of drink, but I always know, even when among the die-hards, that I would probably go further than them, I would leave my life and go on a plane and keep drinking until somebody took me away. But it's strange how much of the experience I'm describing — of growing up in a culture of alcoholism and watching it

play as it lays — also gives out to comedy. My father remained one of the funniest people any of us ever knew. He was reckless in his jokes, both casually abusive and brutal about disadvantage, yet brilliantly satirical, an inspired mimic, and somehow the bad medicine he took in that first half of his life had left him sick but funny. He could pierce weakness because in some deeply immersed way he was always weak himself. He could spot it. He understood it. He knew where to look for it and in truth there was always something self-referential about this ex-alcoholic's way of naming bad behaviour. Every man, however slowly, must come to know the source of his father's pain and outgrow it.

He loved my books. He couldn't get over them. Of all the people I know — many of whom did much more for me, educated me and stood by me — he was the one who felt it was miraculous that I had come to be a writer and made my name writing books. He would ask for copies

in inexhaustible numbers and all the bookshops in Inverness knew him well, as the guy who came in to buy multiple copies by a single author. When I travelled north he would have me sit by the open fire and sign them to his AA friends and "12-steps", people he was helping to get sober, as if one of my books might help them on their way. And that was entirely subjective: I came to see that it had helped him on his way, making him feel that, for all the mess, all the dark hours, all the hospital stays and nights frozen to the pavement, that he had an alibi with his children, for they had each gone on to do better than he had.

During his final hours at Raigmore Hospital where he was dying of complications associated with asbestosis, the builders' disease, he would ask me to do little things for him, as if the little things had become my province. There were people he loved more, the people who made him, but I was the god of small things and that's what he needed then, and he'd reached the end of his great exhaustions. For reasons of their own, my brothers had decided to go home to their children and I was left to listen to some of those last thoughts, along with his second wife who had always been a natural friend to me. "I'm thirsty," he said early on the last evening, and I realised in that moment that I wanted him to ask me for a proper drink. I stood up and put my jacket on.

"I'll go out and get something," I said, and I was thinking Oban Single Malt. We would sit for the first and final time and drink together. He wanted a copy of the *Racing Post* and he reminded me that ice would be handy because his thirst was bad. But, as we know, you can't go home again, and the drink my father wanted was Irn-Bru, a fizzy pop that the adverts of my childhood had always called "Your Other National Drink". I returned from the supermarket and we drank it together. Then I sat by the window and knew that the whisky would wait for another day.



The author's father, Gerald O'Hagan, with Gerald's mother Mary (right) and an aunt, Glasgow, 1959

# "Good God they're related"

Andrew O'Hagan, interviewed by Alex Bilmes

ndrew O'Hagan is a writer at the top of his game. Born in Glasgow in 1968, raised in North Ayrshire, to where his imagination frequently returns, and resident in London, O'Hagan is an extravagantly gifted novelist and a journalist — reporter, essayist, interviewer, critic — of rare and mysterious power, currently a star contributor to the London Review of Books, where his writing career began in the early Nineties, a columnist for The New York Times' T Magazine, and an Esquire editor-at-large.

He's also full of fun, as I have discovered on a number of afternoons and evenings in his company. The man can talk almost as entertainingly as he writes. And he writes like a dream: tough minded and clear-sighted, with style, fluency and beauty.

Recent pieces for the LRB on historical child abuse at the BBC, the Julian Assange affair, and stolen identity on the internet have cemented his position at the top table of literary journalism. This month, he confirms his status among our finest writers of fiction with his fifth novel, perhaps his most coruscating yet.

The Illuminations is set for the most part in two distinct — but not, as O'Hagan proves, irreconcilable — places: Saltcoats, on the west coast of Scotland, and Helmand Province, Afghanistan. In Scotland, an elderly woman, Anne Quirk, once a pioneering documentary photographer, is unravelling, along with her past. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, her grandson, Captain Luke Campbell of the 1st Royal Western Fusiliers, is fighting a terrifying war against three enemies, at least: the Taliban; his traumatised commanding officer; and the impossibility of their mission.

The book's resolution arrives at a guest house in Blackpool, where Luke discovers buried truths about Anne's history, and confronts truths of his own. It's a remarkable achievement: O'Hagan shows he can do intimate domesticity—though never without a humming sense of unease, the ground shifting underfoot—as well as visceral action; the passages in which Luke and his team are engaged in combat are as good a depiction of the horrors of modern conflict as any I've read. He can do delicate, and he can do explosive, sometimes in the same sentence.

O'Hagan's interests are catholic — he has written celebrated stories on showbiz, politics, money, travel, fashion, America, Iraq, murder, childhood — but central to his writing are the stories people tell about themselves and each other, fact and fiction and both.

Alex Bilmes: What was the initial spark for The Illuminations?

Andrew O'Hagan: For a writer, the fuel for a book is always there, pooling in your old sad heart. But there were two sparks. First, someone in my family told me about an elderly neighbour whose hidden past opened up to her when she saw a rabbit in the snow. I looked into it. Turned out the lady had dementia. About the same time I was thinking about the military I'd worked with, one soldier's struggle with the new ethos of humanitarian war. One night I woke up, seeing the old lady at the window, the young man on the other side of the glass, and I thought — good God, they're related.

AB: It's a book about secrets and lies. Those are things that intrigue you, as

is evident in "Anonymous", the piece you've written for *Esquire*, and much of your writing. Stupid question, perhaps, but why that?

**AO'H:** It's not a stupid question, it's the only question. But I'm not sure I know the answer. We tell stories, as Joan Didion said, in order to live, but also as a way of breaking the silence. I've always been drawn to subjects that don't reveal themselves easily; stories that don't seem like stories until you build them. That's why I'm not a newspaper reporter: I don't want to say what Punch did to Judy, I want to go round the back, into the puppeteer's life, his secret passions, to mingle with the blood that flows to his hands, so the reader will end up with something memorable. **AB:** In "Anonymous", you write that even as a child you were questioning the official version of history. You're talking about family history. Was that the initial spur to becoming a writer?

**AO'H:** "The child is father of the man," said Wordsworth. And every writer will reach back to find the source of who they are. "Knowing me, knowing you" might be part of the conundrum, though I apologise for forcing Wordsworth and Abba into a shotgun marriage. I became a writer because I thought it would help me meet people, including myself.

**AB:** Graham Greene said there is a splinter of ice in a writer's heart. It's that which allows him or her to use others' suffering as the raw materials for their work. Your writing is full of compassion, but do you feel that splinter in your heart?

**AO'H:** Yes, I do. Perhaps not as much as Graham Greene, but to me there is nothing, in the end, nothing at all, that lives outside of writing. Asking a writer to keep your secrets is like asking a prostitute not to make you hard. **AB:** Another line from Greene, from *The Heart of the Matter:* "The truth, he thought, has never been of any real value to any human being... in human relations, kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths." What do you say to that?

**AO'H:** Greene knew his onions. But there are some exceptions. I don't care if people tell the truth, except in war, politics and journalism. But if you imagine people just want the truth all the time, then you're missing something crucial about human nature. People love a lie, which is why so many people are devoted to religion. People love fantasy, which is why they dote on film and TV. They love being free to make up their lives, that's why they love Facebook. I'll always be interested in lies and truths, but not as a preacher or a judge. It just amazes me how people go on, and I like to show it.

**AB:** Luke in *The Illuminations* is an officer in action in Afghanistan. He's also a young man trying to sort fact from fantasy, reality from invention. **AO'H:** In war — civilian casualties, genocide — there is no choice but to establish the truth. War novelists, I'm afraid, have no option but to put themselves on the moral front line: separate the reality of war from the illusions of those who start it or commandeer it. That's Luke's conundrum in the book and it's an essential one. In addition, for Luke's generation of soldiers and gamers, there is a genuine confusion about what "experience" actually means. And I feel that resonates for all the characters in my story.

**AB:** Documentary photography, Anne's field, is seen as a means of accurate truth-telling. There's an irony there. One that the Dorothea

Lange epigraph at the front of *The Illuminations* hints at. Could you talk about that?

**AO'H:** A good novel can be a priceless thing in your life because it lifts your consciousness. It's not an editorial. It can't set out to offer complete answers. But it can offer complete questions. I wanted to write a novel where the ironies and hints and secrets would deepen and nourish each other throughout the book, giving the reader something beautiful to solve, and it seemed right to me that Anne's secret should settle on a miraculous talent she once had for photography. The key word for me in the Lange quote — "Photography takes an instant out of time, altering life by holding it still" — is the word "altering". Is reality something one must overcome in order to have a full life? It might be a question, at some level, for everybody in the book. But it's also a question for every reader. I didn't invent the proposition — it's there in Henry James, in Chopin, in van Gogh— but my job is to make the moral and the context new. That's what a novel is. And as we're photographing ourselves to death, it seemed the right element to bring into the book.

**AB:** There's an old canard: everyone has a novel in them. Christopher Hitchens said, "and that's where it should stay". Are you with Hitchens, or do you think we all have a novel in us but, like Luke, we just don't know how to write it down?

**AO'H:** I remember having a conversation with Christopher in a New York hotel room about *Brideshead Revisited*. I, basically, couldn't stand the book's religious sentimentality and he thought it was just dandy. In his defence, I'd say he missed England more than he ever admitted, and, in my defence, I'd just drunk half a bottle of Johnny Walker Red Label. I think we would have fully agreed, however, on the fact that most people have a novel in them the same way that most people have a dreary watercolour in them. It's not that everybody has to be Rembrandt, but novel-writing is not a hobby: it's the hardest thing you can do with your psychology.

**AB:** You write literary fiction and you write journalism. Do you favour one over the other? Is making things up a higher calling than reporting them? Is it harder? Or is it all the same to you?

AO'H: A person who seeks to write well will write a postcard well. Since I was young, I've known that the effort to write great journalism demands everything you've got, and the art of the whole thing depends on your willingness to risk everything and go further. Journalism and the essay are no secondary forms for me: I often find they are absolutely the only way to treat a subject, where the detail is entirely in your notebook, and legal-proof, yet the feel of the story is fully resourced by your imagination. Writing a novel is harder, because it takes so long and uses you up so much, requiring not only stamina but another level of openness and devotion.

AB: Do you see all the work as part of an ongoing project, a grand project? I mean, the books and articles stand up on their own but does it feel to you like each is a new part in a larger corpus?

AO'H: I don't suppose it's very grand, but a project, yes. The books and the articles have always suggested each other, and with any luck

they have brought each other forward. I am stuck with a perception about how we live now, and I've had that since writing *The Missing* when I was 26. I always saw the non-fiction and the fiction as stylistic bothers: I don't hesitate to bring elements of social reporting into the novel, and a lot of the longer pieces of journalism — such as my Julian Assange story, or my piece about the BBC, or the one on Ronnie Pinn and identity theft on the Internet — are really non-fiction novellas. They belong together. I didn't set out with an architect's plan but I now see that I've been building a small house all along. That makes me happy. I write what I want. For a writer, style is simply the sum of what you tended to feel was right.

**AB:** There is a growing sense in the culture that the literary novel has had its day. How do you feel about that?

AO'H: I'm much more worried about the poem. But

I'm relaxed about the whole thing in general. I was a very good barman: chatty, absorbent, generous but fair, and I would go back to it tomorrow without much grief.

**AB**: A good deal of reporting went into *The Illuminations*. Tell me about your time in Afghanistan: when you went, what you saw there and the impression it left on you.

**AO'H:** I went to Afghanistan early in 2013. I got to see a lot of what was happening there, but my most vivid time was spent working with captured suicide bombers. They showed me the other side of the conflict and it became crucial to the war episodes in *The Illuminations*. I went to schools and hospitals and the military presence was everywhere, a huge sense of despondency coming off those soldiers. There were explosions while I was there and it was all a bit tense, but I tried to concentrate on doing some work for Unicef and getting the feel of the country at the same time. **AB:** The combat scenes are extremely convincing. Did you witness any of the bloodshed first hand?

**AO'H:** No, not at all. I wasn't near the front line and those battle scenes came from my imagination, after talking to soldiers and studying the combat missions.

**AB:** You have spent time with those scarred by war, and I know you've spoken with the families of some of those who died. What do you think we achieved by going there?

**AO'H:** One can be very precise about this: we achieved absolutely nothing. We lost 453 British soldiers and saw 2,600 wounded. We killed tens of thousands of Afghan civilians. The whole enterprise cost us £40bn, we damaged our reputation around the world, and we gave birth to many more jihadis than we ever captured, handing a list of grievances to a whole new generation. History will look back on the event as a gigantic piece of political hubris and a merciless folly. As the writer James Meek points out, we were using Javelin missiles costing £100,000 each to destroy houses made of mud. Shameful. Not the fault of servicemen. But I saw confusion and lies coming from every element of the conflict, which is what made me determined to dramatise the conflict in the novel at the local level.

AB: What have you learned about yourself by being in war zones?

AO'H: That I am fundamentally a coward.

**AB:** The denouement of the novel, as its title suggests, comes in Blackpool. Would you recommend the famous Lancastrian seaside resort to *Esquire* readers, or should we stick to Cleethorpes?

**AO'H:** I'm sorry, Alex, but Cleethorpes is simply a lower-middle-class stop-off for people who one day hope to make it all the way to Morecambe. Does it have the Crazy Scots Bar, I ask you? Does it have giant printed rock? Does it have Kiss Me Quick or Shag Me Slow? I suggest it pales next to Blackpool, sir. And I put it to you that *Esquire* readers are far too discerning to turn down the general offer of £1 Coca-Cola shots at the dirtiest bars in England. Plus there's the Illuminations (the lights not the novel, though you can have both for half the price of a cream tea in Cleethorpes).

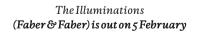
**AB:** The novel is finished. I know you have another on the go, very different to anything you've done. Can you talk about it a bit?

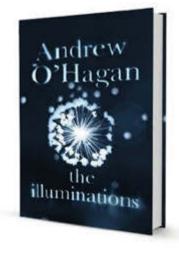
**AO'H:** It feels right, given everything I've been talking about, to be writing a large, fat, social novel set at the high end of London now. It's a reported novel in the old style. It features everybody you've heard of and every restaurant you've been to. You won't recognise a soul. It involves fashion, new media, old money and self-help. It involves false identity and a crime. It's called *Caledonian Road* and I'm excited by the size of the story and the research going into it.

AB: Am I in it?

**AO'H:** You are, but carefully disguised as a lesbian acrobat touring the country with Billy Smart's circus. I'm already in discussions with Jolie to play you in the film.

AB: I'm phoning my lawyers. 🛂







EDITED BY PETER AINSWORTH PHOTOGRAPHS BY LUKE KIRWAN

# HOMEIS WHERE THE STATE OF THE S

CHAIR ONE
BY KONSTANTIN GRCIC (2003)

This contemporary classic constructed from flat planes angled together is as much a sculpture as a functional stacking chair. Educated at London's Royal Academy of Arts, German-born Serbian industrial designer Grcic is the poster boy of new furniture design. £260, magisdesign.com





# **DINAMARQUESA CHAIR**

BY JORGE ZALSZUPIN (1959)

Architect Jorge Zalszupin's fascination with Brazilian modernism inspired him to leave his native Poland and move to Rio in 1949. The Dinamarquesa (meaning Danish in Portuguese) chair's slender, tapered legs with brass feet make it a beautiful statement piece. £1,765, espasso.com











# TIP OF THE TONGUE LAMP BY MICHAEL ANASTASSIADES (2013)

Made from brass and glass, this sculptural table light plays with the idea of balance. The glass sphere rests precariously on the heavy brass base giving the illusion it could roll off at any second. £780, twentytwentyone.com



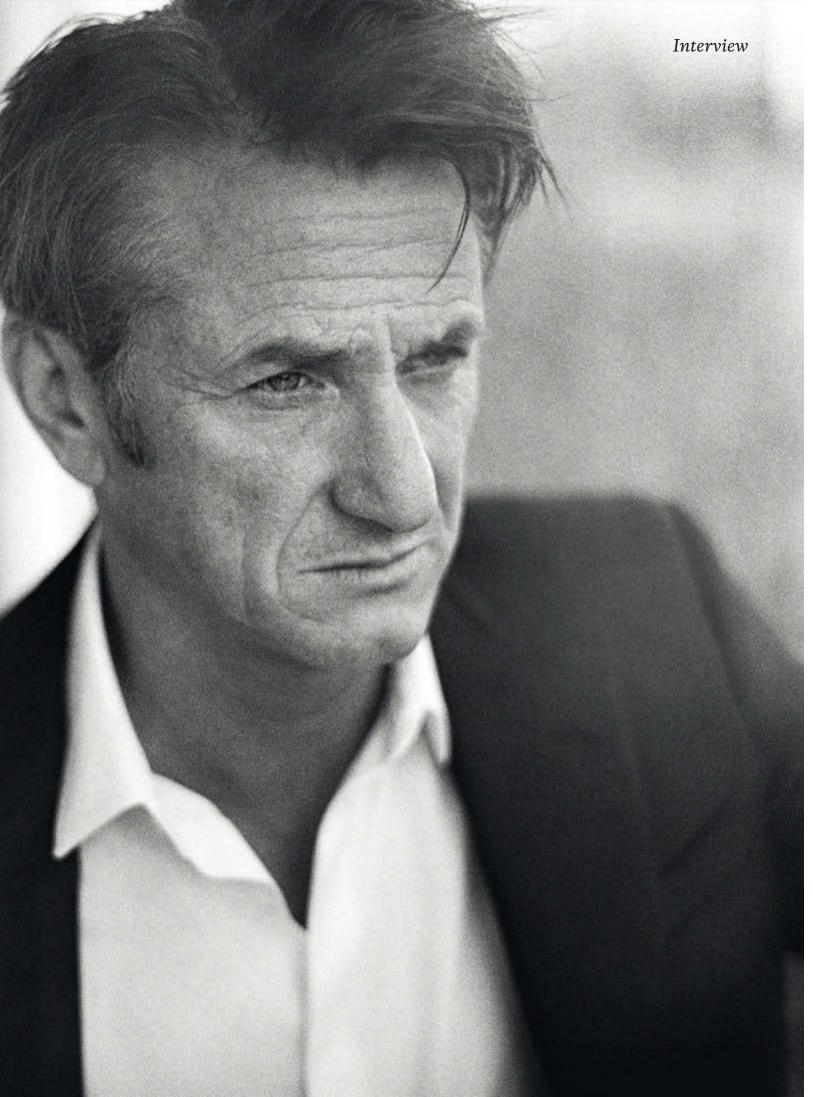
# "I'M JUST ANOTHER ASSHOLE TRYING TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT HIMSELF. AND WHY SHOULDN'T I?"

Sean Penn: father, son, lover, friend, ex-husband, activist, writer, director, actor

INTERVIEW
BY ALEX BILMES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM CRAIG

Sean Penn, photographed for Esquire in Paris, 2014. Black wool suit, from £2,560; white cotton shirt, from £310, both by Giorgio Armani



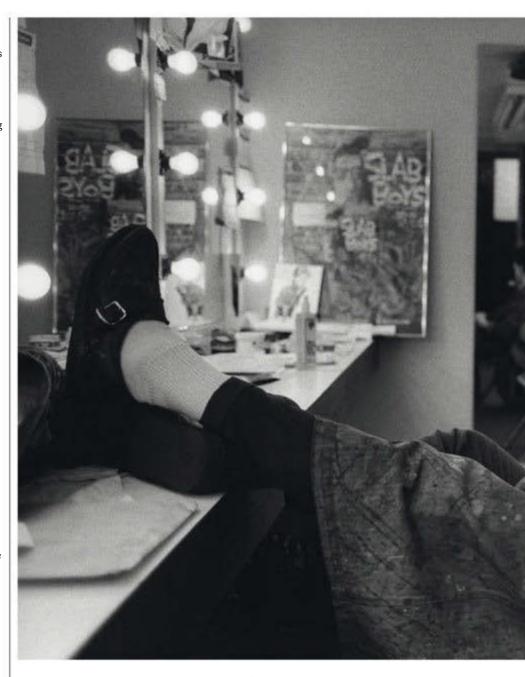
arrived early for my interview with Sean Penn, on a Monday afternoon in Hollywood towards the end of last year, and found him outside an office building near the fabled corner of Sunset and Vine. He was with his assistant, Sato. They were sitting on a metal bench by a bus stop, smoking and watching the cars go by. Penn offered me a seat and a cigarette and we talked for a while about the TV show he'd watched for the first time the night before, The Blacklist, with James Spader, whose performance Penn enjoyed.

It turned out that the notion of watching a TV show was a novelty in itself: Penn has never seen an episode of *The Sopranos* or *The Wire* or *Breaking Bad* or any of the other exalted dramas of the past decade or so. But he'd been left alone for the evening — Charlize Theron, his partner of the past year, had gone out with girlfriends — and, after mulling and then rejecting the idea of calling some buddies for a drink ("They're all in Haiti or Syria") he'd settled down to a rare night in front of the TV. It may have been a surprise to him that he even knew how to work it.

I'd met Penn once before, nine months previously, when I was in LA for *Esquire* to interview Theron, and I had witnessed then his happy dislocation from current pop culture and technology; he'd squinted with quite magnificent hauteur at an iPad I was trying to manipulate into life so Theron's young son, Jackson, could watch the Disney movie, *Frozen*. Now he looked at me askance when I made suggestions of TV shows he might enjoy. I was wasting my time — Penn gets his kicks elsewhere.

A week before our meeting, he had arrived back from Africa, where he'd spent a number of months directing a new film, The Last Face, starring Theron as the director of an international aid agency and Javier Bardem as her medic lover. Shortly, he and Theron would be off to Haiti — her first trip to the desperately poor country that Penn has made his second home since the earthquake of 2010. "We like to get out of town," he told me, drily.

Inside the building, we took a lift up to the new US HQ of his Haiti operation, J/P Haitian Relief Organization, of which he is founder, CEO and chairman. Penn employs 350 permanent staff, 95 per cent of whom are Haitian. Today, they were all in the field: other than us, the offices were empty. We sat on opposing sides of a conference table, in plastic swivel chairs. Sato, a no-nonsense Japanese-American woman who has been working with Penn since the Nineties, brought us cans of Diet Coke, which we poured over ice, and a bag of crisps that Penn munched on.



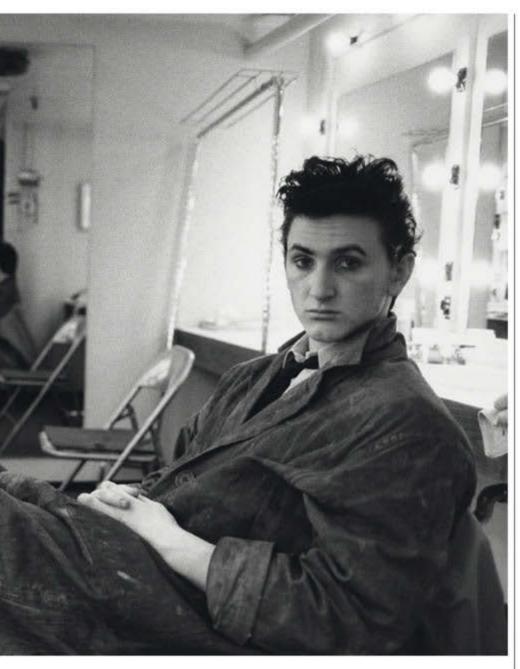
Penn has beaten his addiction to smoking and neither have I, so I put my pack of Marlboro Lights on the table and he nipped out occasionally to pinch another American Spirit from Sato. For good measure, he wore a nicotine patch under his shirt. We ashed in our cups.

Penn is not tall — maybe 5ft 9in — but he is physically imposing: brawny and with an off-balance buccaneer's stride that speaks of a life lived not behind glass and under strip lights but somewhere Out There, where the sun beats down on a man's leathery hide and the wind whips through his thicket of dark hair and the years of exposure to the elements carve deep lines across his brow. On the day I met him, he wore the most insubstantial of pencil moustaches and a tiny triangular wisp beneath his lower lip, like a trainee musketeer.

Penn has a remarkable face: big, bony, obstreperous nose; thin mouth; blue eyes shaded by heavy lids. He has a sharp chin that he leads with, tilting his head, puffing out his chest and pirating out into the world. He is as gnarled and knotted as an ancient California oak.

For our interview, he had on a green combat shirt and boot-cut jeans. To say he looked incongruous in a corporate meeting room would be to understate things in a manner that Penn himself does not favour. As he began to talk, he swung his cowboy boots onto the table and leaned back, squinting through the double-glazing at the panorama: west across Hollywood and Beverly Hills towards the ocean and, unseen in the distance, Malibu, where he grew up.

There's an almost hallucinatory image of Penn in his new film, *The Gunman*,



Penn photographed for Rolling Stone magazine backstage at the Playhouse Theater, Broadway, New York, 1983

a globetrotting thriller in which he plays a former US marine on the run. It shows Penn carrying a surfboard through the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo. He's shirtless, displaying the discreet torso of Stallone in his Rambo prime. It struck me that, whether intended or not (and this is not a film otherwise filled with sly, self-referential winks or throwaway metagags), this shot neatly encapsulates Penn's own unlikely journey from LA surfer to Hollywood bad boy to garlanded giant of cinema and international activist: a man who is happier, by his own account, in a far-flung refugee camp than he is in front of the TV in his LA mansion.

Bare-chested and carrying a surfboard is where Penn first came in, both in life — he grew up almost on the beach — and on screen as Jeff Spicoli, the original spaced-out

surfer dude, in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), the film that made him a star.

At 54, he has been working for 35 years and his name is routinely spoken of alongside the greats of screen acting. Perhaps only Daniel Day-Lewis, of Penn's contemporaries, has generated quite so much critical acclaim, and commands such respect from his peers. Penn has twice won the Best Actor Oscar — for Mystic River (2003) and Milk (2008) — and been nominated for it on three further occasions.

Still he has, he told me, often felt like an actor out of his time, born too late to do the work that would satisfy his ambitions.

Penn arrived at a crossroads moment in the story of American film, as the artistic experimentation and seriousness of purpose of Seventies Hollywood was squashed by the blockbuster commercialism of the Eighties and beyond. The second of three sons of Leo Penn, a Jewish actor and TV director who was blacklisted during the anticommunist hysteria of the Fifties, and Eileen Ryan, an Irish-Italian theatre actor who gave up her career to raise their kids, Penn grew up around film and theatre people, and studied acting with Peggy Feury, a former disciple of Lee Strasberg. Even in his early twenties, he was already a throwback to a previous generation of actors, directors and writers.

He worked in New York theatre before Hollywood film, and socially and professionally he apprenticed himself to the hell-raising stars of the dwindling, almost defunct California counterculture: Dennis Hopper, Jack Nicholson, Bob Rafelson, Monte Hellman, Leonard Cohen, David Blue, Harry Dean Stanton. Later, he was friends with the writers Charles Bukowski and Hunter S Thompson, who described Penn, approvingly, as "batty as a loon".

Initially, Penn was lumped in by the press with the Brat Pack, the loose-knit, cool-haired gang of flashy young actors in early Eighties Hollywood that included Penn's school friends, brothers Emilio Estevez and Charlie Sheen, as well as Rob Lowe, Tom Cruise, Matt Dillon and more. Penn was the baddest bad boy of the bunch. He rode motorbikes. He wore leather. He scowled. He drank. He fell out with directors and studios. He punched paparazzi.

But he was also serious about acting as a craft and film-making as an art — and unlike some of the others, he had talent to burn. Few critics back then made great claims for the performances of his peers — with the exception of the equally intense Cruise — but Penn was recognised early as a committed method actor, researching his roles for months, remaining in character off-set. He was The Talented One.

In 1985, after a brief courtship, he married Madonna, at that time among the two or three most famous and lusted after women in the world. The relationship was tempestuous, not helped by the intense scrutiny of the press. In Macau in 1986, during the shooting of the disastrous Shanghai Surprise, Penn was arrested after allegedly dangling a paparazzo by his ankles from a ninth floor balcony. In 1987, he served 33 days of a 60-day jail sentence — 23 hours a day in solitary confinement — for violating probation he'd been given for punching a fan who tried to get too close to Madonna. The following year, Madonna herself called the police after an argument at their house in Malibu. They divorced in 1989.

# Interview



Sean Penn accepts the Best Actor Oscar for his leading role in Milk, 2009

For 20 years following that, with a couple of breaks, he was in a relationship with the actor Robin Wright, best known now for her role on the TV show *House of Cards*. They married in 1996 and relocated to suburban Marin County, in Northern California, to raise their children away from the celebrity circus of LA. They have two kids: a daughter, Dylan, now 23, and a son, Hopper, 21. They divorced in 2010.

Along the way, Penn became a political activist. For this, in common with other famous frontline Hollywood liberals, he is lionised by some, traduced by others.

Not that he behaves quite like other famous frontline Hollywood liberals. In 1992, during the LA riots, he drove into the teeth of the violence and had a shopping trolley thrown through his windscreen for his troubles. A decade later, he took out ads in the Washington Post and the New York Times opposing the Iraq War. He travelled to Baghdad and Tehran in 2002 and 2003, writing about his experiences for the San Francisco Chronicle. When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf coast of the US in 2005, he went to New Orleans, found a boat and a rifle and rescued dozens of flood victims. In January 2010, in the horrifying aftermath of the Haiti earthquake, he arrived in Port-au-Prince with a plane full of doctors and medical supplies and a \$1m pledge from the philanthropist Diana Jenkins; he went through about half of it before they fell out. He has been there, on and off, ever since.

His is, by any standards, a life rich in incident and experience. He lives large.

Sincerity — genuine sincerity, not the pose familiar from the red carpets and the

talk shows — is a potentially troubling quality, in a man and in an artist, but especially in a celebrity. We've grown unaccustomed to it. We're not sure how to react to it. It's too often confused with earnestness, which is a word that has come to be used pejoratively in our culture of irony and snark. Earnestness suggests humourlessness, narrow-mindedness, lack of sophistication. Sophisticates are cynical and hard-bitten and cruel.

Sean Penn is sincere. He might even be earnest. He's far from humourless — he has a soft, goofy laugh, almost Spicoli-like, that he uses often. And while he's irritable and even jaded, he's no cynic. He's the opposite: a romantic. You'd have to be, I think, to believe in the redemptive power of art and philanthropy and, well, love — as he does.

Famously, he takes no shit. In fact, not taking any shit might be Penn's most marked characteristic. He can be prickly, explosive. The opposite of meek. When he was mocked for his activism by South Park creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone in their geopolitical puppet satire Team America: World Police (2004), rather than keep quiet or play along, he sent back a "sincere fuck you" and offered to take Parker and Stone to Baghdad so they could see the situation for themselves, since they found it so funny. He wasn't kidding.

What's he like to talk to? Penn tells me he is a fan of road trips. He likes to take off, cross-country, with no specific destination in mind, no route mapped out. He is fond of a motoring analogy, too, so I'll steer towards an easy one: Penn's conversation does not follow a straight road, from A to B. It takes diversions, unexpected twists and turns, unscheduled stops, from A to B via J, with a circle back to D, a quick hop to W, and a brief stop at N on the way back to B. In some ways this makes him a frustrating

interviewee. He rarely answers a question with anything approaching a concise, definitive answer. Instead, he circumambulates the topic like a man surveying a used car, kicks its tyres, offers up a quotation from a hero, an anecdote from his youth. How come I enjoyed talking to him so much? For one thing he seemed to be enjoying himself, too. And that's infectious.

His more outrageous statements made me laugh, which he didn't seem to mind, at all. He's an entertainer. There's a twinkle in his eye. There's charisma and warmth. Even when he was annoyed, he was entertaining. At one point, talking about fame, privacy and the internet, he picked up my Dictaphone and slung it across the table at me, inadvertently (I think) pressing the pause button in the process, robbing posterity of five minutes of quality rant. When I discovered this and pointed it out, he took the news with amused equanimity.

The quotes that follow are intended to reflect a discussion that was sometimes baffling, occasionally impassioned, always lively. We started at the beginning, with no end in sight. I'm not sure we arrived anywhere, but we passed some interesting scenery along the way.

# 1. "A LIFE I WASN'T GOING TO LIVE"

**Oh, my childhood was great:** Huckleberry Finn with a surfboard.

He was a war hero, yes. But my father was a hero, period. Charlize often says about her son that her number one concern is that he grows up to be a kind person. More than she wants him to be a nuclear scientist, or an activist or anything else: kind. My father was that. That's not easy to be as an American.

It wasn't that I was a serious kid. I was very shy. Socially shy. Not uncomfortably so, not unhappily so, not isolated. I was invited to the parties and I went to them. I just didn't talk to anyone while I was there.

I didn't have a single date in high school. Not one. Take it back. Once. One date that ended in a very shy kiss and then I didn't know what to say the next day. So I didn't have a second date.

They say there's three kinds of people: those who know math and those who don't. Figure out from that which one I am.

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GETTY

I hated school. It was a waste of my fucking time. Preparing me for a life I wasn't going to live.

-

A lot of people have sob stories in their childhood. I don't. I went through a lot of demon doors by myself. A lot of anger and things that I acted out on and got me in a lot of trouble. I felt troubled for many, many years.

# 2. "I DON'T HAVE ANY EXCUSES"

I've been led by two things in my life: rage and influence. And one influence would have been this line of EL Doctorow: "The artist's responsibility is to know the time within which he lives."

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The rage? I don't have any excuses. I had a very loving family. At 54 years old, I haven't found a shrink who can give me a false memory or a real memory that challenges that.

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My assumption is that my personality would have reacted very differently to being blacklisted than my father did. The kind of appreciation he had for the United States came from being the child of first generation immigrants. And his pride in his service for his country was undiminished by that same country, a few years later, keeping him from being able to provide for his family. For five years. He saw it as a growing pain, for the country. There was no bitterness. I aspire to that, but I don't know that I could claim that would be me today.

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I'm not a believer in anything, really. And I'm not a disbeliever in anything. Someone says there's a God? It's a punch line to me. Someone says there's not a God? It's equally a punch line. I'm perfectly happy accepting that God, if there is one, doesn't need me to identify His or Her existence.

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I know right from wrong. I know what being kind is and not being kind is. I know what I find tolerable and not tolerable. I can have a temper related to people diminishing me or themselves unfairly. Which is usually a simultaneous action. Someone belittles themselves by belittling me.

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**If I say I celebrate kindness** in an interview for British *Esquire* there are people who would line up to say, "Oh, yeah? Well, when

I was on the street and I asked for an autograph for my child..." A three-year-old who had no fucking idea who I was!

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There's a lot of power in kindness. I haven't used it enough.

## 3. "TINY LITTLE DOTS"

What's it like to be a celebrity? Probably like being a good-looking girl in New York City or Los Angeles or Rome. Everybody thinks they got a piece of you. They whistle while you walk. We didn't create this. It's been around for a long time. And it's not about celebrity. It's about the diminished sense that people have of themselves.

A star is somebody who goes to Universal Studios on contract and trains in everything from tap to voice to this to that and they can do it all. They goddamn deserve to be called a star. That's a discipline. You're talking about celebrities, man.

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My parents knew some famous people. My dad directed TV shows. And they knew people who had gone onto great things from their time in theatre. George C Scott. Jason Robards was the best man at my parents' wedding. But they were not engaged in a celebrity lifestyle. I had a sense of what they did, what the work was, because I'd come to work with my dad sometimes, and that was exciting. But they weren't party people. And then, when I got in I was really culture shocked. But I think about it now and Entertainment Tonight didn't exist. That came towards the end of my first marriage. And there was maybe one magazine: People magazine. Now...

—

Paparazzi. I had a lot of that shit because of my first marriage. I always try to suggest to people, forget they have a camera. You're looking at it saying, that camera's following some rich person, that's the price of fame. But if you're willing to consider that the people they are following are human beings, take the camera out of their hands. Just be followed every day all day by somebody. At some point, you might consider homicide, forget about punching somebody in the face. You want your life! And people usually get it when you put it in those terms.

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**Bob Dylan** said the worst thing about being famous is people reminding you who you are on *their* terms.

What people are complaining about now is: everybody's a celebrity because of the internet, all of that. And they are talking about privacy. They want their privacy. Fuck you. Your privacy? Your privacy ain't worth shit. Because if it were, you wouldn't buy that fucking magazine. You want your privacy? I've been dealing with that shit

Anonymity is a precious thing, but I don't think anybody has it any more. Roll with it.

since I was 20 years old.

I often take great peace in that Neil Young line: "Doesn't mean that much to me / To mean that much to you."

I am, like you, just one of those tiny little dots in a car you see from the airplane. And I feel like that every day. And I like it.

# 4. "CAN'T YOU READ THE SIGN?"

In America there's a fear that creates monsters on every corner out of everybody we're not.

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I used to drive across country a lot. As soon as I got a driver's licence it became my addiction. And still today, did I not have the obligations I have, I would do more of it. However, it's not what it was once, because there's signs everywhere. Do this. Don't do that. "Can't you read the sign?" Everywhere. On fences. Everywhere. In a mini mall. Everywhere. It's not the open country it once was, and that's just topographically.

In Spain, they take a siesta. A country that's in incredible economic collapse doggedly takes August off. The *busboys* won't work. They need the money, they won't work. That's when they see family. Well, how incredibly spiritually sane is that, right? Very! We don't have that. So we get very tightly wound. It's the price we pay for being the expeditious, entrepreneurial, capitalist selves that we are.

We don't know how to be patriotic any more without having to fool ourselves that we're number one in the world at everything.

We loathe the narcissism that we're surrounded by because we see it in ourselves. Our culture celebrates everything but humility.

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#### Interview

There's so much white noise, so much stuff is full of shit. Without naming names of reality show people, you're so saturated with all of that, all the time, if you're here. You're not saturated with it in Haiti, or South Sudan, or Liberia, or Sierra Leone. You don't want to say being there is healing, but it's clarifying. And with clarity comes everything.

What did I learn from jail? Well, I was in a situation where I surrendered. Meaning I knew I was going to jail and I had agreed with the court on a surrender date. As a result, I was able to pre-submit my reading materials. So I had a sack of books. I'm talking about Raymond Carver - which I don't suggest for jail; little depressing - to the essays of Montaigne to a lot of James Thurber. Two days, I'd read everything. I was in an 8 1/2 ft by 11ft cell, wondering when I was going to get out. Man, you really learn a lot about how you use your time. I also learned how to sleep for the first time in my life. And that lasted until about three months after jail. I could sleep anywhere, any time. And I'd been a lifelong insomniac, and am again. I take some medication for that. I take my Ambien, you know? But I didn't have a cathartic moral advance of any kind in jail. It's just boring.

We live in such a hypocritically polite and puritanical society and the closest I feel to hatred is around that stuff. And I get pretty close to hatred.

I'm in love with a woman and home is where the heart is, right? I'm in love with my children, they're here. Jackson's very committed here with schools and all that. Charlize has friends and family here. And there are upsides and conveniences that come with being here. I'm not a tortured person, being here. And I have access to other places. I know they're there and I'm in constant contact with them.

One of the greatest satisfactions I ever had was watching television and seeing the Dixie Chicks come out after that whole fucking witch-hunt on them, and [singer Natalie Maines] blast out that song they sing: "I'm not ready to back down." And I just sat there, like, "Yes!"

You go down to the Mexican border on a hot Saturday morning. 95°F outside. You'll see no less than 100 people, all of them seniors, many with VFW hats on — Veterans of Foreign Wars - with walkers, waiting to cross the pedestrian gate of the border, to buy the pharmaceuticals they can't afford to buy in their own country: in Texas, or Arizona. Red [Republican] states, right? Where did I get off on this? I don't know what I was talking about. It was a point I was making relative to something or other.

My world of friends has shrunk. There are people I have great care and affection for I don't talk to any more simply because we took different forks in the road. When I say my closest friends are overseas, they are.

# "NO TIME FOR DOGS"

I'm increasingly driven towards the natural world and the disenfranchised world and the underprivileged world and the uncared for world in terms of what it gives me. Notwithstanding what I might believe at times I can give it. It's a reality check in a way that no ego can defy. And God knows, I should know. I have exposed a very strong ego to those worlds and it doesn't play. Which is a great feeling.

I will tell you that facing the emergencies of Haiti, while hectic and stressful, is the first time I had peace of mind since I was 14 years old. Yeah.

Do I see myself as a romantic? I think it's fair to say that others do. I think there's a very close kinship between romantic and optimistic. I would accept both of those terms as compliments even by those who were using them pejoratively.

There's a word I hate: "humanitarian." I've got someone coming to my desk in a tent in Haiti telling me I'm a piece of shit because I'm not worried about the Chinese who are coming over to steal organs from these dead bodies over here? Well, I've got two live ones over there who might live if I get them to the fucking ambulance, so if you've got five or six dead people who are getting their organs sent to China I don't really have time for that because we've got 72 live ones a day we're trying to deal with. So I'm not a humanitarian to them. Sorry.

You know, I didn't take any dogs out of the Katrina waters. So I'm not a Peta hero of the year. Sorry! Forty people, we pulled out of the water. So, no time for dogs.

This is our one minute on earth. We're not going to be able to change everything.

In terms of tons of rubble removed from the streets in Haiti, we've made an enormous impact. In terms of lives saved in our hospitals, an enormous impact. One life is

an enormous impact, but there's been many. Thousands. Survivors of gunshots and machetes and disease. But poverty goes on. It's not only the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, it's twice as poor as the next poorest country. And it's an hour-and-a-half from Miami.

We're aspiring to be able to say we made a change. Emphasis on "we" because my organization - by "my" I mean as founder and CEO — is part of something that's also very troubling in Haiti, which is the Republic of NGOs aspect of it. You don't want NGOs in a country. We are designed to be gone in 10 years. And I think we will be able to succeed at that and I will be able to claim something then. But not until then.

When done well, with dignity and care and commitment, movies are a huge medicine, and really important socially and politically, and it can be a very fulfilling thing. I needed something else.

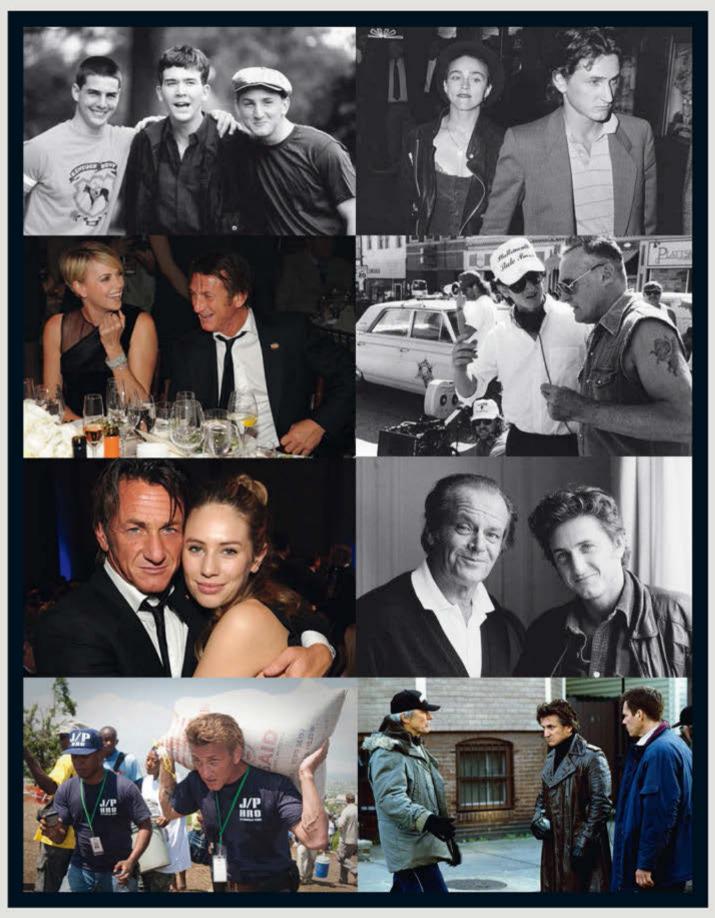
Haiti was an accident. I had been singleparenting my son. I had cleared my slate to do so because I thought I might be singleparenting him through two years of high school. After eight months of that his mother came back into his life, wanted to spend time with him, he with her, and I found myself with a year and four months uncommitted. And four days later the earthquake happened. I went down there to spend two weeks and I saw I could do more and I stayed. Also, my son had had a traumatic brain injury, in that eight-month period [Hopper came off a skateboard]. He was fully recovered by the time he went to see his mother and he's 100 per cent today but he almost died. And there was a lot of pain involved and he had been given morphine in the hospital and to see him have some relief from that pain, that made an impression on me. The first reports of the earthquake were that amputations were happening with no intravenous pain medication. I worked with President Chavez who gave us 350,000 vials of morphine. Met us at the Venezuelan embassy and I got a group of people together to truck it around.

A lot of people would find some irony in the idea of me being a diplomat.

I didn't come back from Haiti, like many of my colleagues did — especially after the emergency phase where it was about dead bodies and amputations - I didn't come back from that, land in Miami and go, "Oh, my God! The materialism is so disgusting!" I'd had 49 years of that before I ever went to Haiti. I knew it really well.

Yeah, I take things personally.

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Clockwise from top left: with Tom Cruise and Timothy Hutton, early friends and co-stars in his first movie, Taps (1981); with his first wife, Madonna, at a boxing match in New Jersey, 1988; with his friend and collaborator Dennis Hopper on the set of Penn's directorial debut, The Indian Runner (1991); with another friend and co-star, Jack Nicholson, at the Deauville American Film Festival, 1995; with Clint Eastwood and Kevin Bacon on the set of Mystic River (2003), for which Penn won his first Oscar for Best Actor; in Haiti, 2010; with his daughter Dylan Penn, now an actor, in 2014; with Charlize Theron at the annual Sean Penn & Friends Help Haiti Home Gala, 2014



# "THIS IS NOT **REAL LIFE"**

Little House on the Prairie. Simi Valley, California. Hot day. Fucking wool suit. I was about 14 years old. I was an extra. Lunch, they all went to get food. I thought, "You're eaters not actors!" And I stayed out in the sun. They came back and said action and I started doing an Irish jig, just trying to keep myself from falling down. I collapsed, from the heat. Lessons in acting...

Acting, to me, is: whatever works. In the theatre it's: whatever works every night. And in the movies it's: whatever works every day, for months.

One of the things I notice today: actors are less willing and ready to be directed. Because they've been given, by the embrace of the culture, a false sense of what their work is: their work is to express what they feel on that day. Bullshit! You know? Bullshit!

I got news for ya, man. This is not real life. There's poetry here. Real life doesn't happen in two hours. And you're hitting a mark so don't tell me that you're that guy. You're hitting a fucking mark and you're in a key light. I don't know where I went off on that.

If somebody's gonna tell me that Daniel Day-Lewis is a less legitimate artist than somebody with some bristles in his hand tied to a piece of wood, you're out of your fucking mind. I'm looking at a guy who has created a dream form to be influenced by and inspired by and excited by. That has significance.

I find more like-mindedness, generally, among older actors. By definition, people who started in the theatre, because less and less do now. I was at the tail end of that, just enough to get caught up in the dream of it. The Actors Studio was still a very vital thing. [Influential theatre producer and director] Joe Papp was still alive. For American actors, that's not a small thing. And you had so many of the greatest generation of transitional actors, who had come from theatre into film. Really a rich time. But also a set-up for extraordinary disappointment. When I started acting in film, it just evaporated: these were writers who had never written a play.

I quit for five years at one point. And Dustin Hoffman says to me, "You're not retired, you're disappointed." He was dead on. That's when I started writing and directing.

I don't know who the three top acting teachers are in town now. And they were fucking gods, back then.

Baryshnikov was a friend. He was in Irvine, Southern California, choreographing a ballet. We were kind of room-mating for a while at my house in Malibu so I'd go down with him to these rehearsals, and at a certain point it hit me, and it was emotional: they gave up their childhoods, there's no other way the body does this. This discipline, this commitment, is an art. Whether or not you love the aesthetic, this is serious shit. Success is not based on serious shit any more. Someone gets a job on Die Hard 32 because they got a pretty face?

Why are my movies dark? Fascinations of the moment. The movie I just made [The Last Face is anything but that. It's tough, because the world of it is tough. But it's about beauty, and it's about love. I had long conversations with John Cassavetes about movies. He was so clear. He says, "I'm not interested in anything else. I'm only interested in love."

The freedom I've found in directing is that as an actor — especially if you consider yourself to have two or three thoughts in your head in the course of the day - you want to find characters and stories that are of immediate interest, that reflect the journey and the questions in your own life. It's been a hard 30 years for that: for looking for those characters and stories. With writing and directing, which is my preferred duty on a film, I'm the one choosing the subject matter I'm gonna live with for the next couple of years.

Over time you have your ups and downs. You get overconfident and then you get self-conscious again. Things happen. And you learn from that. And you adapt. And then comes something like Milk. It was a totally different process from anything I'd ever done or have done since. There was incredible archival footage of Harvey Milk. What you're doing is falling in love with somebody. As a human being, the heart of this guy was so clear. And so I just played the footage for months, every day. Through the night, even if I turned the sound down. And then I went to the set. That's it. Pretty much. That and having a great director and a wonderful screenplay and a great cast around you. But I didn't do anything else.

San Francisco, six in the morning, every morning, making Milk. I'd get to the top of Divisadero with my driver, Chet. We'd stop at the hot wings place at Divis and Lombard, get hot wings, start eating them, just about to hit the Castro, hit the button, boom! "IT'S RAINING MEN! HALLELUJAH! IT'S RAINING MEN! AMEN!" And that was it! We were in the game, all day every day! Just, whatever we thought Harvey would a liked.

Mystic River, very different situation. You're adapting again. You say, who's [the film's director] Clint Eastwood? What's his vision? His vision of life is jazz music. So what's that? It's a stage. Bunch of strangers get on it, start riffing together. And magic happens. It's not perfect. It's not the way they'll record it later. But man, if you get hold of those tapes with the right group and the right piece of music there's nothing like it, right? So what am I gonna do? I'm gonna tell him no, no I wanna do take 32 even though this other actor's already long burned out on take seven and because I'm gonna make myself better it's gonna make the movie better? I don't think so. I gotta get up there and play jazz. These guys are ready on the so-called rehearsal take. And then he walks away, he's done. Cumulatively, what does that do? You can love or not like Clint Eastwood's movies but he has had a consistent body of work that allows for some things that really touch people at large. I understand a different way to make movies but this is this guy's jazz studio and when you go with it you're gonna get such a cool experience. Then you've got someone like Alejandro [González Iñárritu, who directed Penn in 21 Grams (2003)] who will put you through 48 takes but ask for no more investment from you than he will give, so it feels like you're working and it feels good. Then you also get a lot of jack-offs.

It's not about, do you like your character? It's, are you comfortable in his shoes? I have been desperately uncomfortable in a character's shoes on several movies: The Assassination of Richard Nixon, Carlito's Way. Anybody who's under everybody else in their own mind. That stuff is hard. I'm not being critical of that. Those were the challenges I was looking for at that time. And I could see myself looking for again, rather cautiously.

Alejandro [González Iñárritu] talked to me about doing Babel at one point. I read Babel and, God, I wanted to do it but I knew what it was going to be. From the first scene, you're desperately trying to keep your wife alive. Right? I decided not to do it and he lucked out and got Brad Pitt. And I remember running into Brad at the Toronto Film Festival. Brad had done a lot

#### Interview

of movies already. He was a big movie star. He'd done hard movies. But I knew Alejandro. And I knew by then, that's not two hours, that's three or four months of that feeling every day, being pushed by this masterful director who's not gonna take anything less that 100 per cent. And so I ran into Brad after he'd finished it, and been great in it, and he yelled across the room, "You motherfucker!"

They said, "Woody doesn't like to talk to people much." Well, it was a different process [on Sweet and Lowdown] because it wasn't an ensemble. I was in every scene. What happened is it was in the New York Post that we'd been at dinner at this restaurant this one night. So that was unusual. An actor never went out for dinner with Woody. Once in a while an actress but not an actor. I realised I had something here, because those crews have worked with him forever, but they never had a conversation with him. It was an odd family where they never met dad. So I'd come into the trailer in the morning. like, "Hey! I didn't know Woody could sing!" "Woody can sing?" "Yeah, I mean because we hit the karaoke bar last night and it was great because we both wore matching cowboy hats and Bermuda shorts. We were doing 'On the Road Again'. He sings really well!" They're looking at each other like, "What?"

**I loved Woody, by the way.** He was hysterical. "Eh, Sean, you know what was wrong with that take? E-e-e-e-everything."

We're young when we start, we've got energy to go, we're fascinated with the difficult stuff. You get a life and kids and you're gonna be more selective on those challenges.

**As Warren Beatty said,** very astutely, "You never finish a film, you abandon it."

You saw *The Gunman*? What are they showing that to press for? That's not finished. It's not even fucking looped!

# 7. "EXTREMELY GOOD TERMS"

I've had relationships that were not with famous people, or people aspiring to be famous. And in some cases they went more poorly! But as it turned out, yes, the two

marriages I had were with high-profile people, in their own ways. But my romantic life has not been exclusive to that.

One of the underrated versions of opening yourself up to somebody is finding a shared ethic. I have found myself in situations where my ethics were adopted for the period of the relationship and then the floor was pulled out from under me. And perhaps that person would say the same thing. I don't know. I've made a lot of mistakes. And some of that is idealising a relationship or a person in a certain way. Or falling victim to the way they seem idealised. I don't mean by the popular culture but by other people in your life.

I'm very friendly with my first ex-wife. I would say that I'm on extremely good terms with the children I share with my second ex-wife.

Initially, in a divorce, you kick and bite about the other person. But finally you're looking at your failures to that person, to a marriage, to a friendship, to yourself during that time as well. Because no matter what the other person was or wasn't, for better and for worse, it really has so little to do with the growth you need to find better circumstances. Almost exclusively it has to do with your own stuff.

Yes, I'd get married again. You say I've been married twice before but I've been married under circumstances where I was less informed than I am today, so I wouldn't even consider it a third marriage, I'd consider it a first marriage on its own terms if I got married again. I mean, I like the tradition. A friend of mine wrote a line, "Without tradition, new things die." And I don't want new things to die.

#### Yeah, I'm surprised to be in love.

Lot of reasons. I'm self-proclaimed bad at mathematics but I can do two plus two: 53 years old plus finally beginning to figure out why you haven't been happy in a single relationship? It could seem too late. But to run into somebody now who you care about is a much more passionate, deeper, truer and — God! — a much happier feeling. It's a lot more romantic and a lot more fulfilling to be in a relationship and to think you're a good person within it.

Everything is one day at a time. None of us can count our chickens, that's for sure. I get worried every time my kids are driving somewhere, and they're 21 and 23 years old. But we're sitting here today. And today I'm a very happy guy.

I was one of those fathers, when I was out of town, I was on that Friday red-eye, back

on Monday. My ex-wife and I worked hard to not work at the same time. I was very present. All of that stuff. But still: there's a lot of time I want back, time I wish I'd spent with my kids. And by the way, we talk about the mistake all the time as it relates to the kids, but it's a mistake for you. Fathers and increasingly mothers, too. And you can't get it back.

My daughter's acting. My son's acted in the movie I just made. He's talented. She is, too. They're both really talented and they're happy. They grew up in a small town, and yet they were exposed to everything. They seem to have a healthy sense of it all.

When my daughter was 16, going on her first date, I practised a long routine. I'd trusted her. She'd been out socially with her friends, but she hadn't dated. And I'd always told her what would happen, but she didn't take me seriously. The day came. She was ready and the guy rang the bell. I said, "Go upstairs, you're not ready yet." She said, "Yes, I am, I said, "No, vou're not," I said, "This is my time." "Oh, my God. Dad!" "Dylan, let me be clear with you. I've always trusted you. Your mother and I have been very liberal about letting you do things and you've been very responsible. But you have to go upstairs and not be ready for five minutes. I am going to have this moment as a father, at the door with this guy." So, one more time, she's, "Oh. My. God." And then she went upstairs. She knew I was serious. And I went to the door. And I opened the door, "Oh, Mr Penn!" I said, "Call me Sean." And of course I was two things in that neighbourhood. Three things. Because it wasn't a movie community. I was the radical commie in a right-wing bastion in Northern California. I was the intimidating guy from the movies and from the neighbourhood, who didn't smile a lot or talk to a lot of people. So it was, "Ooh, the scary guy." And I was the father of the girl, which is always what it is. So I said, "Nah, call me Sean." I said, "Dylan should be down in a minute, she's almost ready." I said, "Listen, I want you to have a great time tonight, and I'd prefer you get in early. Although I don't wanna be Mr Controlling on that. You're not going to drink with my daughter, are you? You're not gonna drink and drive?" "No, sir." "Sean, just call me Sean." I said, "Just let me say one thing to you: Whatever you do with my daughter tonight, I'm gonna do with you when you get home."

I'm just another asshole trying to feel good about himself. And why shouldn't I? That's what everybody should try to do.

I can be happy-go-lucky, too. 18

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# THE PENN IS MIGHTY

In almost 35 years on screen, Sean Penn has acted in more than 50 films and counting, and directed a further four, with another on the way. What follows is Esquire's entirely subjective selection of 15 worth watching again, in release order



# FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH

(Amy Heckerling, 1982)

At least in America, where thanks to Penn (and Phoebe Cates' breasts) this high-school movie remains a cherished cult, his breakthrough stands as arguably his most iconic performance. He plays Jeff Spicoli, the California stoner-surfer dude with the heart of gold, the bagel tucked into his pants and the admirable philosophy: "All I need are some tasty waves, cool buzz and I'm fine." For a clever man, Penn does a very convincing stupid. It made him a star at 21.

# THE FALCON AND THE SNOWMAN

(John Schlesinger, 1985)

Again employing the shot-away quality familiar from Fast Times..., as if a firework just exploded in his face, Penn plays an in-over-his-head, rich kid drug dealer in this Seventies-set spy drama, from the director of Midnight Cowboy and Marathon

Man — with whom Penn predictably fell out. With his oversized aviators and flared suit, initially he's twitchy, nervy and funny. Later, as his character succumbs to addiction, he's almost painfully intense. Debut appearance for the pencil moustache.



## **AT CLOSE RANGE**

(James Foley, 1986)

Blond and bulked up, Penn is the archetypal all-American bad boy in this grimy rural crime drama. His scenes with Christopher Walken as his sociopath father achieve a combustible mixture of savagery and sensitivity. It was at this point that, for all the attention swirling around his marriage to Madonna, his reputation as the most gifted actor of his generation of US film actors began to be taken as read. While Tom Cruise dominated the box office with Top Gun, Penn was the critics' choice.





## **COLORS**

(Dennis Hopper, 1988)

Penn is the cocksure junior partner to Robert Duvall's hard-arse veteran cop in Hopper's tough portrait of the South Central and East LA gang wars. Penn's character seems an arrogant prick at first, more concerned with his hair than fighting crime, but he slowly emerges as brave and

even endearing. Penn is plausibly tough in the action sequences (he has the pumped-up body of an Eighties action star) but he does wounded masculinity as delicately as any Seventies method man. Plus, none of them had Ice-T rapping on the soundtrack. "What up, homes?" etc.



## CASUALTIES OF WAR

(Brian De Palma, 1989)

Nobody hoping for a career as a popular box office star would have taken Penn's part in the inconsistent De Palma's grim Vietnam parable. So while his contemporaries were eyeing action franchises, Penn was starring opposite straight-arrow Michael J Fox as Sergeant Meserve, a soldier brutalised by combat into a hateful, vicious rapist and killer, a bully whose face contorts with fear and hate — and to accommodate the tobacco he chews throughout.

## **CARLITO'S WAY**

(Brian De Palma, 1993)

Penn struggled with the psychological impact of walking in his slimeball character's slip-ons, but from the audience's point of view, this is one of his most enjoyable performances, a scene-stealing supporting turn as Kleinfeld, the paranoiac, bubble-permed, cigarillo-smoking, coke-snorting criminal lawyer to Al Pacino's Puerto Rican drug dealer in De Palma's disco-era mob romp.



# DEAD MAN WALKING

(Tim Robbins, 1995)

With his lazy Louisiana drawl, his well kempt bouffant, his wispy moustache and his folky chin beard, plus his ability to smoke cigarettes with cruel intent even while cuffed at the waist. Penn's Matthew Poncelet, the murderer at the centre of Robbins' impassioned death row melodrama, is one of his most memorable

performances, a study in rage, fear, defiance, resignation, guilt and sadness, as tight and controlled - no histrionics here - as the restraints that tie him to the gurney. The New Yorker's John Lahr described Poncelet's final breakdown as "among the high water marks of contemporary acting". Penn received his first Best Actor Oscar nomination.





## THE THIN RED LINE

(Terrence Malick, 1998)

Years later, on the release of the weird and wonderful Tree of Life (2011), star and director would fail to see eye to eye but this was a happier collaboration, with Penn one of the few of the A-list actors assembled for Malick's WWII epic to enjoy more than a small

fraction of screen time. (George Clooney, John Travolta, John Cusack, Woody Harrelson and others were not quite so lucky.) Still, the play's the thing, as Penn often says, and this sublime, metaphysical war movie is one of the best films he has been associated with.



# SWEET & LOWDOWN

(Woody Allen, 1999)

Forget Shanghai Surprise (1986): Penn can do comedy. A lovely performance as the dapper, degenerate guitar prodigy, Emmett Ray — a Django Reinhardt manqué — in Allen's stylish jazz age tribute. Despite his character being ignorant, obnoxious, solipsistic, drunk, dishonest, unfeeling, profligate, and ultimately, tragic, Penn — who learned to play guitar for the role — makes Ray funny and even sympathetic, and received another Best Actor Oscar nomination for his efforts.

## THE PLEDGE

(Sean Penn, 2001)

Penn's third film as director — following The Indian Runner (1991) and The Crossing Guard (1995) — with Jack Nicholson quietly magnificent as a retired cop destroyed by his search for a child-killer. Worth seeing for one scene alone: when Nicholson's character breaks the news of the girl's murder to her parents. "There are such devils," he says, giving name to the horror that lurks in the shadows of Penn's doleful early films as a director.



## **MYSTIC RIVER**

(Clint Eastwood, 2003)

The New York Times critic AO Scott called Penn's performance in this film "one of the definitive pieces of screen acting in the last half century, the culmination of a realist tradition that began in the old Actors Studio and begat Brando, Dean, Pacino and De Niro..." Which would make it close to the greatest piece of screen acting ever. Eastwood's chilling Boston crime drama, based on a Dennis Lehane novel, is about the explosive effects on a tight-knit Irish-Catholic

community of the killing of a 19-year-old girl, as well as the awful secrets buried in the pasts of its middle-aged protagonists. Penn plays the dead girl's father, Jimmy, the snarling, tough guy owner of the local corner store. He projects immense power and danger, plus animalistic rage. It's said it took eight men to restrain him during the scene where he learns of his daughter's death, and he had to be fed oxvgen between takes. The Best Actor Oscar duly followed.





## INTO THE WILD

(Sean Penn, 2007)

Based on John
Krakauer's book about
Chris McCandless,
who turned his back on
conventional society
and reinvented
himself, in the tradition
of Emerson and
Thoreau, as Alexander
Supertramp before,
ultimately, dying in
an abandoned bus in
Alaska. A sad story,

then, but Penn's film is more epic romance than nihilistic wallow. A tribute to the big skies of the American West and the free spirit of the counterculture, it's gorgeous to look at and moving in its belief that human relationships are what matters: we are our family, our friends, our lovers.



## **MILK**

(Gus Van Sant, 2008)

Another gigantic performance - warm, witty and wise - and another Oscar for Best Actor for this turn as the real-life, rabble-rousing activist and politician Harvey Milk in Gus Van Sant's highly affecting film about the gay rights movement in Seventies San Francisco. Penn's Milk is vulnerable, funny, seductive, charismatic, boyish, a loveable square with a big, wide, open smile that creases up his face. The physical transformation is subtle in its specifics - Penn flattens his hair, adjusts his posture, flutters his hands - but phenomenal in its effect, as if Penn really is possessed by the spirit of Harvey. His Oscar acceptance speech was warm but pointed: "Thank you, you commie, homo-loving sons of guns." Liberal Hollywood at its best.

# THIS MUST BE THE PLACE

(Paolo Sorrentino, 2011)

A strange and remarkable road movie from the Italian maestro, in which a zonked-out former pop star traces the Nazi who brutalised his estranged Holocaust-survivor father. Penn's Cheyenne looks as sad as The Cure's Robert Smith, seems as frail as Ozzy Osbourne, lives in the kind of Dublin mansion you can imagine Bono inhabiting and seems to have borrowed his spectacles from Woman's Hour's Jenni Murray. He talks in a soft, Emo Philips voice and walks like a sultry teenager. Weirder still, Penn fully inhabits the role and, in the process, somehow carries this most implausible of films. Impossible to imagine any of his A-list peers taking this role. Even harder to imagine any of them pulling it off...



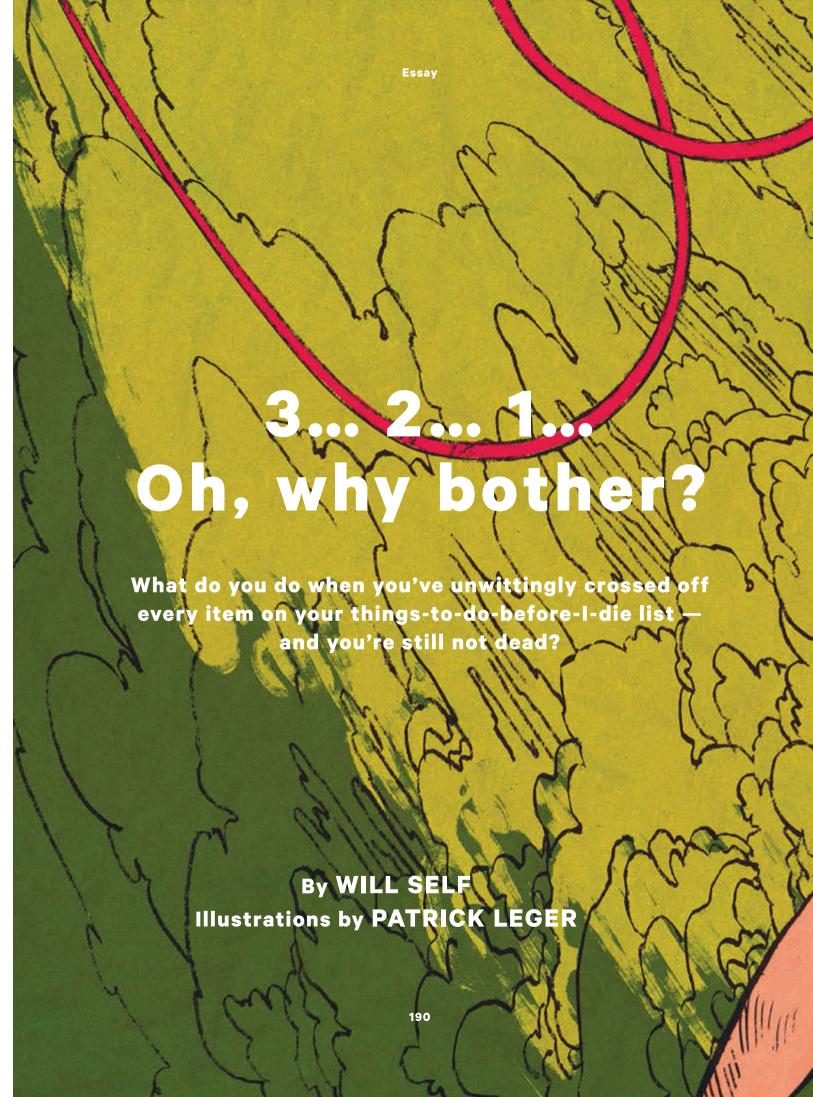
## **THE GUNMAN**

(Pierre Morel, 2015)

Not Penn's most cerebral film, but a superior thriller. He plays a US marineturned-mercenary-assassin-turned-aid-worker who must battle not only his conscience but also "post-concussion syndrome" and a classy cast of rogues led by Mark Rylance and Javier Bardem. Ray Winstone

is his grizzled sidekick; Idris Elba a sharpsuited smoothie. The action pinballs from war-torn Kinshasa to the City of London, to rural Spain. There's a terrific punch-up in a London boozer, and a gory showdown in a bullring. Fans of Morel's Taken (2008) will be impressed. Out on 20 March







O PARAPHRASE EIGHTIES ARTROCKERS TALKING HEADS'
IMMORTAL LYRICS: "And you may
find yourself, staying in a 15-star
hotel... And you may find
yourself, horning cocaine from
the jewelled navel of a nubile... And you may

find yourself, in the most dramatic landscape in the world... And you may find yourself, behind the wheel of a high-performance automobile that's just slain a deer... And you may find yourself, about to tuck into

a dish of the potentially poisonous piscine delicacy, fugu... And you may well ask yourself... well, how did I get here?"

And more to the point, will I survive? Survive not simply eating the fugu, a dish made using parts of the puffer fish, and much beloved of the morbid Japanese, who savour the risk of a lethal dose of tetrodotoxin (more than 1,200 times stronger than cyanide) quite as much as they do its unique taste, but survive

much longer at all. Because looking down into my dish of raw fishy bits it occurs to me my goose may well be cooked, and by eating the fugu I will have inadvertently completed a bucket list I never realised I was drawing up. But ignorance of the law is no defence, and given the rigours of contemporary life, with its insistence that we wring every last tepid drop of pleasure from the damp flannel of existence, having done all the things I ever wanted to do in my life, clearly my days, hours, minutes even, must be numbered.

I never paid much attention to the phenomenon of the bucket list, to me it was simply another instance of the way we egg each other on to take a hedonistic and self-centred view of our own mortality. The notion that hang-gliding off Mount Fuji, or cuddling with manatees in the Florida Keys, or sucking on the Koh-i-Noor diamond as if it were a Murray mint, could somehow mitigate the horrors of a terminal illness has always struck me as being on the side of absurdity known as "revolting".

As the great metaphysical poet John Donne wrote: "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main"; whereby it follows that should you be granted a preview of the abyss about to swallow you, the important thing is to make your peace with your fellow men, not take them for a valedictory bungee jump.

I've never been bungee jumping at all, but somehow I don't think that'll save me because I have been white-water rafting,

and as any serious bucket list-compiler knows, it's one or the other.

I did it against my will: my then teenaged children insisted on it.

Yet despite kicking and screaming

al the way to the launching-off point when we were slaloming down the Tully River in North Queensland with our raft master screeching, "This is how we do

it, yeah! Doggie style!" then vigorously miming anal sex (pitching rather than catching), I did

manage to forget my abject terror. Why? Because I was so bloody

intent on saving my soaked skin. It does strike me as, um, paradoxical, that anyone who *knows* they're about to die should want to take part in a potentially fatal activity. I suppose the logic is that you can properly relax and enjoy it because it hardly matters if you pop your clogs. Either this, or possibly for some devout, sanctity-of-life types, putting a dangerous sport on your bucket list is a way of inadvertently procuring assisted suicide.

But I say: why wait until you're dying to off yourself? Surely one of the most adrenalised activities imaginable would be booking an appointment with Dignitas, flying to Zurich, entering the pokey room where you're meant to do the dread deed, and when you're presented with the foaming glass of sodium pentobarbital, taking a big gulp and holding it in your mouth for a few seconds before spitting it back into the concerned Swiss face hovering over you. OK, I've wandered off topic... still, you can understand why: I'm still sitting here staring at my fugu while contemplating the possibility

of my imminent extinction, so it's hardly surprising. Now, where were we? Ah, yes, I was casting my mind back over my life to see whether I really have done everything I ever wanted to do (in which case I've had it), or if there's at least one unfulfilled desire to keep me hanging from the cliff-edge of existence.

T MAY BE BUNGEF JUMPING OR WHITE-WATER RAFTING WHEN IT COMES TO BUCKET LISTS, but that by no means covers all the available thrills; being in mortal danger does indeed add a piquancy to life, and can I put my hand on my still loudly beating heart and swear I've had my fair share? Well, let's quickly run through this sub-list: 1. Been held up at gunpoint (check); 2. Overdosed on narcotics (check); 3. Been lost in the desert (check); 4. Been in a car crash (several); **5.** Survived a terminal illness (check): 6. Swum with sharks (check); 7. Been lost in the mountains in a whiteout (check); **8.** Flown in the cockpit of a commercial airplane (double check). I know, I know, Number 5 looks a bit like my attemptedassisted-suicide-for-kicks fantasy, but in my defence, beating off the Grim Reaper does make you feel wonderfully, uh, alive.

I'd been out on the lash all night with the writer and film-maker Jonathan Meades, a man of prodigious appetites. At 4am, we were chucking back Marc de Bourgogne in his writing hut somewhere in the Kilburn wilds; at 11am, I was driving through the Euston underpass when I became aware of a throbbing in the knuckle of my left index finger. I paid it no mind. I was booked,

I offered him a dram from my bottle of Famous Grouse. He upended it, necked about half, set the bottle down, wiped his mouth and said: "Have you any idea what it's like to be trapped in a confined space with a potentially violent man?"

"I'm beginning to get an idea," I replied insouciantly. Then he told me his story: he'd been a prison officer during the 1990 Strangeways riot and was held hostage, abused and tortured for days. I suppose I might've felt anxious if it weren't for the fact — I realised later — that I was running a triple-figure fever. During the jolting night, my grapefruit hand transmogrified into a melon one and there were black streaks of sepsis running up my arm. The marvellous thing about being that ill is denial. I tell you, it's a life-saver: I looked at my melon hand and thought, "Humph, better pop into the doctor and get some antibiotics, that looks a little nasty." I was booked on the ferry from Scrabster to the Orkney Islands; the train was late and I had only a couple of hours to do 110 miles over icy, switchback Highland roads in a rust-bucket with wheels.

I drove like the clappers; fortunately the car was a Citroen with a dashboard-mounted shift, so I could change gear with my left melon... sort of. After 120 minutes of slippin' anna slidin', I pulled to the end of the jetty just as the ferry was setting sail. This being a remote part of the world where people help each other rather than merely observing health and safety, the captain stopped, backed up, and as the car-deck door was lowered, his crew roundly abused me. Still, I made the ferry, and it was just as well, because a week later, when I finally regained my right mind, in the Balfour Hospital outside the main

- 1. Been held up at gunpoint (check);
- 2. Overdosed on narcotics (check);
- 3. Been lost in the desert (check)...

together with my car, on the "deerstalker express" to Inverness that evening, and given the price of the ticket there was no way I could miss the train. By the time I got to the station, however, my left hand had swollen to the size of a grapefruit. I entered my designated sleeping compartment to find my bunkmate already there: a bearded and agitated Scotsman with wild eyes.

Orcadian town of Kirkwall, the doctor told me when I'd lurched in I'd had about six hours to live. It was septicaemia, naturally: an opportunistic bacteriological infection attacking a man who laboured under the delusion that he had an eye for the main chance. It took me a month to recover. Still, the whole experience was paradoxically life enhancing, for a while.

**UT JOB AND RUSSIAN NOVELIST FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY WAS** SUBJECTED TO A HORRIFYING **MOCK-EXECUTION** when he was a young man. The Tsarist authorities had arrested him

together with other members of a radical discussion group. They were all tried, sentenced, then led out onto the parade ground of the Peter and Paul Fortress, where, just as the first three condemned were being tied to the posts and the firing squad was loading its rifles, the messenger came with their reprieve. Writing later, Dostoevsky said that when he realised he was spared he swore that he would savour every single second of life left to him, never forgetting the awfulness of his ordeal. But things being the way they are (you wake up one morning with a hideously painful hangnail, the next tormented by an Ed Sheeran song), Dostoevsky soon forgot his oath; and although I made a similar one when I hobbled out of Balfour Hospital, I too soon let it drop, like a crumpled tissue of lies, beside life's high road.

The Buddha was once asked what the strangest truth about humanity was; he thought for a moment then answered: "That we may all die at any moment, yet we all behave as if we're going to live forever." Well, I'm guilty as charged: I've had my fair share of lifethreatening experiences, but they've never taught me to savour the moment. Instead, like all the rest of us naked apes, I've spent the balance of my life chasing status, money, sex, power and extreme experiences of one sort or

was a foregone conclusion, but then it almost always is. A couple of months later I was lying, legs akimbo, on an examination couch in London's Hospital for Tropical Diseases while a medic peered up my arse through a wide-bore aluminium tube. It was an innocent era - they'd only recently introduced the tube - and I asked him: "What can you see up there?" To which he replied, slightly petulantly, "Just some rather rabbity-looking faeces..." In retrospect, I'm not quite sure I ever had any sort of life-plan beyond debagging to bag these sorts of experiences.

I've held a life-size gold effigy of Kate Moss and played catch with Damien Hirst's £50m diamond skull; I've seen my name up in lights outside the National Theatre (albeit spelt incorrectly), and I've danced the night away in the samba-and-cocaine crazed favelas of Rio; I've bantered with Jack Nicholson (I asked him if he "got out much", a startlingly good conversational entrée, I'm sure you'll agree); I've created life and I've taken life away (I believe I mentioned the deer-slaving earlier), yet it's only now, as in my fugue I stare at my fishy fugu-nemesis, that I realise what it's all been about: the bucket list. And now I do, at long last, take time to properly consider it, I think back over the last few weeks and realise I've been saying my goodbyes: meeting up with friends I haven't seen in years; visiting my childhood home and other places that have emotional resonance; and I've also been delivering little valedictory homilies to my children of this form: "Remember, the most important thing in life — more important than

## 4. Been in a car crash (several): **5.** Survived a terminal illness (check):

6. Swum with sharks (check)...

another, without ever questioning what was driving me on so remorselessly. My greatest ambitions in life — to witness the births of my children, to have a book published, to have a threesome (vastly overrated IMHO) and to bathe in the sacred waters of the Ganges passed me by in something of a blur, especially the latter since I'd shared a chillum full of bhang with a naked holy man, before lowering myself into the bacillus-swarming waters. I was in search of enlightenment and union with the great cosmic cycle of being, but about halfway across I collided with a dead water buffalo,

love, or health, let alone success — is to maintain well-wiped kitchen surfaces. It doesn't matter how dirty the cupboards are, what matters is what's on show."

Wise guff, I'm sure you'll agree, and in line with this newfound sagacity I've found my own priorities have also been shifting. I no longer think about the peak experience lying in wait for me a year or five ahead — hell, I scarcely consider what'll be occurring in five months' time — what matters is the here and now, what matters is just being and, most importantly, being with the ones I love. went under and came up spluttering. Dysentery 🕴 I've taken to compiling miniature bucket lists

(feel free to visualise at this point, one of those dinky little zinc buckets high-end burger joints have taken to serving fries in) that set out the experiences I'd like to have should my life be spared for the *next five minutes*. A sample list reads: 1. Scratch my arse; 2. Breathe; 3. See the colour orange; 4. Think about the most pendulous scrotum I ever saw

(a Russian bathing in the Black Sea in 1998, an astonishing sight, albeit trumped by my friend, Sarah, who saw a woman with no nipples in a Turkish bath in Istanbul in 1989); 5. Make a cup of tea. Each time I've done all the things on a list, I take a further deep breath, listen to the muffled beating of my heart, then begin

compiling another.

permanent Now.

This is my quandary:
is it my compiling and
fulfilling of the mini-bucket
lists that's actually keeping me
alive? And if so, will I have to write and
execute lists faster and faster in order to avoid
the axe I can feel whirring about my head?
At least when I was inadvertently compiling
The Big List which was, it transpires, my life,
the lag between deciding on an experience
and having it was long enough for me to get on
with the important in-between stuff, such as
vigorously wiping kitchen surfaces. Hence the
fugu-eating: if it doesn't kill me, it may
reconfigure my listing life, freeing me from

what's beginning to seem like a terrifyingly

I say "now" but I mean "then". That's the trouble with constructing these hypothetical situations: you know I survived the fugu, or else I wouldn't've been able to write this stuff. And have I been released from the hideous go-round of minute-by-minute bucket lists? Yes, after a fashion, the only problem is that now I've definitively completed The Big List it hardly matters if I'm dead or alive. Family and friends have been, um, supportive, however, there's no disguising the fact that they regard me as surplus to requirements. It's hardly surprising, given most human interaction consists in the articulation of this want or that need, and I no longer have any of my own. The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer — who was frankly something of a grouch - believed

that the only force which mattered or even existed in the cosmos was desire. This universal desire is, he thought, expressed in our lust for life (and our life of lust), and in the shivering-into-being of all the other entities we see around us. When I realised the rather tatty spider plant squatting seemingly inert on my desk was in truth seething with desire it gave me quite a... turn.

I felt still queasier when I walked out into the garden and sensed the desire burgeoning all around:

in the moist, labial petals of the flowers and the plants' turgid thrusting stalks; in the neighbourhood dogs' hungry barks, and the marauding foxes' coital yelps; in the avaricious cheeping of overflying birds, and the earthy-munching of undermining worms; in the famished howl of jet engines plummeting towards Heathrow, and the whip-poor-will

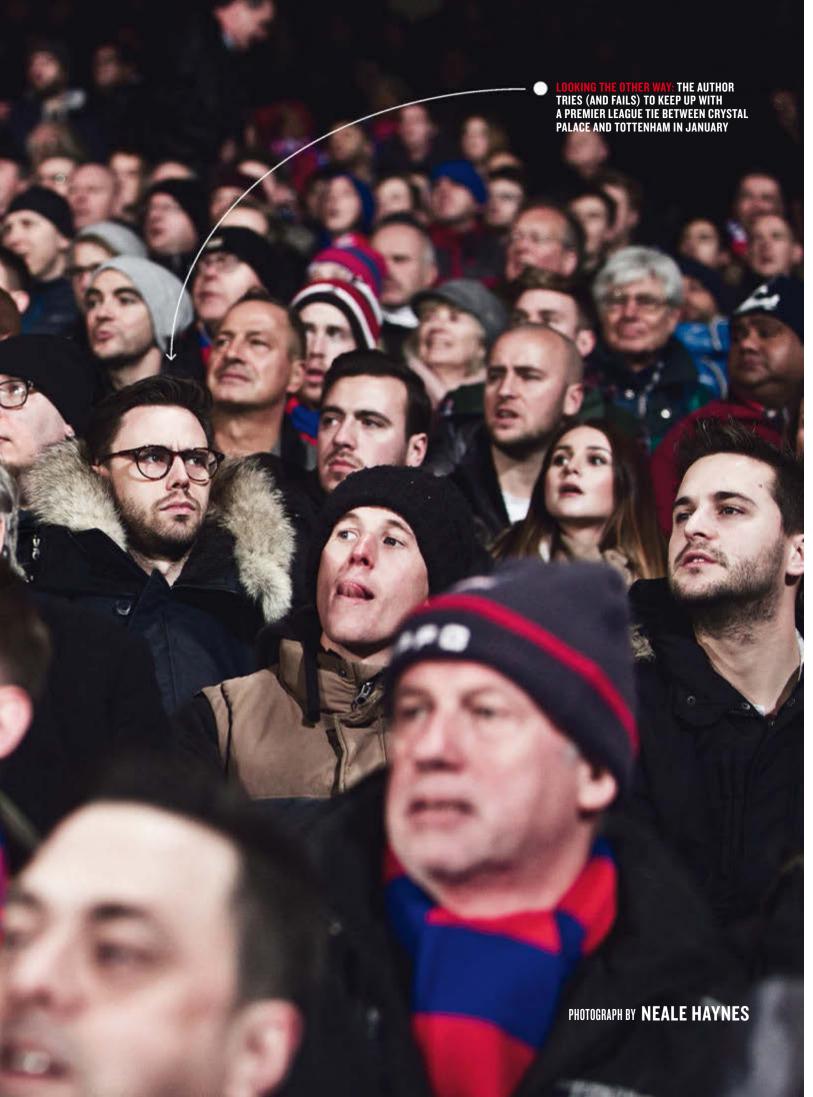
song of passing police cars' sirens!

So much desire for life and its increase! Yet a flower can be easily lopped, a plant chopped off in its prime; a dog may be put to sleep and a fox painlessly culled with a high-velocity rifle.

Contemplating this — the streaming superfluity of life and its confluence with the teeming waters of the Styx — my way forward became clear. I had completed my own bucket list and thereby been granted a vision of things as they actually are, in themselves; henceforth my mission must be to ensure that every greenfly, traffic warden and bedraggled daisy I come across has compiled and completed their own.

It's tedious work, this, kneeling on the verges of arterial roads and communing with somnolent dormice — their bucket lists are short and to the point: 1. Eat; 2. Fuck; 3. Sleep — however, there's at least this consolation: if I find myself paraphrasing Eighties art-rockers Talking Heads' immortal lyrics from "Once in a Lifetime" -"And you may find yourself, kneeling on the verges of arterial roads and communing with somnolent dormice... And you may find yourself, talking to goldfish slowly revolving in a pet shop window... And you may find yourself, sharing a sleeping bag with a rough sleeper on The Embankment..." Well, I don't need to ask myself: how did I get here? Because I know — and so, by now, should you. 🛭





Subject: Help!

Sent

# To whom it may concern, I live locally to your ground and I'm interested in supporting your football team. Is there any advice you can give me? Many thanks, Matthew

hat's how it started. A series of emails — all unanswered - sent to football clubs in my area, asking for more information about why I should support them. Leyton Orient are down the road. West Ham will soon lease the Olympic Stadium right next to my flat in Stratford and Arsenal are the team I get the chance to see the most. Fact is, though, I'm a 30-year-old man who doesn't follow football and I think it might be ruining my life.

I've made it this far without a club, without any proper interest in football, actually, but it's not been easy. I can talk my way around World Cup matches and I've learned to just keep my mouth shut and watch when there's an FA Cup tie on. In truth, I quite enjoy it, but so far, watching matches at club level, when there's no immediate outcome further than a team winning or losing, has left me nonplussed. In the meantime, I've had to work hard to find common ground with friends of friends, girlfriends' fathers and strangers in pubs, unable to fall back on "Who do you support?" It's a pain in the arse not having that social safety blanket.

My ex-girlfriend's father was a strident Millwall supporter.
An imposing, self-made man from southeast London, we never really got on. It probably had more to do with me being a bit of a waster who was always broke than my disinterest in football, but it certainly didn't help. I always felt like he viewed me with suspicion because of it. Short of any common ground, he used to ask me how much money I expected to earn

as a journalist instead. (Funnily enough, he wasn't too happy with that answer, either.)

Recently, a change of job has compounded my problems. I've become part of a team who communicate entirely through football. Across the borders of age, upbringing and job title, I've watched them forge relationships via merciless ribbing over results on a Monday morning and the ironic hero worship

"WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO WEAR? A SCARF? HAT? CAN I BRING A SATCHEL?" of John Arne Riise. That cliché about football being the universal language has proved to be entirely true and I've become stranded in a conversational no man's land between, "How was your weekend?" and, "Any plans for Saturday?" I can't ignore it any longer. What if this lack of shared interest is like not being able to play golf, or not smoking? What if I'm missing out on opportunities because I can't tell you which ground AC Milan play at?

I decide I should do something. It's time to see if, after three decades of social water-treading, I can finally learn to love the beautiful game.



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ow, that's not to say
I've taken this lightly.
What if the voice in
my head, the one that
thinks it's everyone
else's problem, not
mine, is right? "There
are some English men
who find striking up

non-sporting conversations with males they don't know a little challenging," says John Williams, a sports sociologist at the University of Leicester, whom I phone to ask about whether it's ever too late to start following football. "Men should really broaden their horizons and their topics of conversation. But discussing Wenger's problems, or the current troubles at Anfield, can be as illuminating as any exchange about art or popular culture.

"Following football is about communities and solid collective identities — being part of something stable and long-lasting," adds Williams. "Historically, it's a rite of



# COLLEAGUES FORGE FRIENDSHIPS VIA RIBBING OVER RESULTS AND THE IRONIC HERO WORSHIP OF JOHN ARNE RIISE

passage in this country. Not to like sport can raise difficult questions about one's masculinity and sexuality — the same is true, of course, of women who like sport too much."

Right, good. Not only am I suffering socially, my inability to talk about football might also be stoking latent fears about my sexuality. Apparently, there's more at stake here than I first thought. I need to get on with it, but where do I start?

"Go and see some games," says
David Barber, the FA's chief historian.
I thought it best to speak to someone
who can give me the long view; put the
tradition of football supporting into
some kind of bigger context. Barber is
just the man to do it, too: he has been
to more than 6,500 football matches in
his life, a dedication that has earned
him the nickname of The Superfan.
He's surprisingly noncommittal about
which team he supports, though.
"I just like watching any team, really.
It's about being part of a family; it's
a love of football, not a specific club."

But how do I find that love if it's not there from the beginning? I don't hate football, but it was never watched religiously in our house. My dad only became interested when

there was an international tournament on and, despite having fond memories of staying up to watch Italia '90 with him at the age of six on the busted old television in our back bedroom, it never seemed to extend beyond that. I was crap at playing it, too. I never went to see matches as a kid, didn't have a big local team and the game just seemed to pass me by. Football, said my dad, was a sport for morons (not really a fan of the big picture, my old man). For a while there, I was inclined to believe him.

I was too young to really know about the worst of the UK's football violence either, but I caught the tail end of it when cheap flights to Europe became commonplace, television coverage exploded and the last of the "top boys" started fighting abroad. I watched as British men fought rolling battles with rival fans, foreign police and each other in the market squares of Milan, Munich and Istanbul, throwing plastic chairs and getting tear-gassed. I saw the news reports condemning the behaviour of the English, heard the stern words of the politicians and even began to feel embarrassed to be British. As far as I knew, football meant men shouting at televisions in pubs or fights and I had this ridiculous idea that if I went to a game I'd get beaten up. In short, I was a snob.

In the end, it wasn't until I was 18 that I saw my first live match. On a dismal Saturday afternoon, I made my way from Keele University up the A34 to Crewe. There were four of us in the car: Rick; Simon; Lisa; and me. We watched Brentford lose 2-1 to Crewe Alexandra. I remember finding it difficult to follow the action on the pitch. I remember worrying about what I should wear. Jeans? Trainers? Could I wear a beanie hat? And I remember a bald-headed man whose neck fat rolled over the collar of his shirt, screaming abuse. In the end, the stewards had to kick him out, but it was hardly The Firm.

"Football fans have a bad reputation sometimes," says David Barber. "It did used to be violent but it's not any more. It sounds clichéd but it is a universal language."

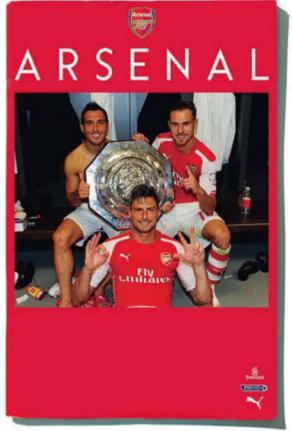
There's that phrase again. As if sensing my cynicism, Barber clarifies: "It's the only reason a lot of people have to see the country and socialise."

He makes a fair point. I've seen more fights in the bars I worked in

"UNLIKE THE OFFSIDE RULE, AT LEAST YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE WITH A MEAT PIE" after university than at the football matches I've been to. You can find violence anywhere if you're looking for it. And it's unlikely I'd ever have visited Crewe without football, either — I certainly haven't been back. Interestingly though, Barber says Barbados is his favourite country to take in a match. "It's a great place for it because people watch it for the games, not the teams. They're happy to be non-partisan. It's like a party."

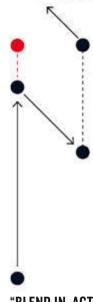
Sadly, I don't have any friends in the Caribbean, but I do have one with season tickets at the Emirates, who offers to take me to see Arsenal play Coventry City in a Fourth Round FA Cup tie. There's certainly an argument to be made that if you're going to find a reason to love football, you may as well start with the best (or, at the time of going to press, the fifth best). I file in through the turnstiles — the first time I'd ever been inside a Premier League stadium — buy a beer and walk into the ground. Regardless of how you feel about football, the Emirates is impressive. A fresh-out-of-the-box sporting arena, it feels bright, optimistic, shiny. Even on this pisser of a night, it's welcoming. As I walk down the steps, I don't get goosebumps, the hairs on the back of my neck don't stand up, but I'm struck by the scale of it. It feels like something important is about to happen and reminds me what John Williams said about community and being part of something long-lasting. I'm sitting three rows from the front, close enough to smell the pitch, and watch as Arsenal put four past Coventry City in the pouring rain.

If I'm honest, much like that Brentford-Crewe game, I don't have a clue what's going on. Around me people are shouting at players if they fluff a ball or clapping if they put in a nice touch. I'm struggling to tell the difference. Then the chanting starts. Arsenal fans begin singing the name of one of their midfielders to the tune of The White Stripes' "Seven Nation"



Army". "Oohhhhhhhhh Santi Cazoooooorllllaaaa, Oohhhhhhh Santi Cazoooooorlllllaaaaaa." The atmosphere is great but if I sound like an American trying to talk about "soccer ball", it's probably because, despite seeing the team I was there to support score four goals, I left feeling a bit removed from it all, like I'd turned up to a stranger's wedding. I was happy for them, of course, but it didn't really mean anything to me. I always get embarrassed when I try and celebrate a goal, even if I'm watching England. I've never felt compelled to jump up and down and hug the person next to me. Even when we won the Rugby World Cup, I didn't scream and shout, I just sat there, in awe, quietly thrilled. It never really felt like a personal experience.

The closest I came to feeling like that was watching Liverpool come



"BLEND IN. ACT Casual. Buy A programme" from three goals down in the 2005 Champions League Final to beat AC Milan. I heard about the majesty of The Kop, I knew Liverpool weren't doing very well in the league and I remember Boris Johnson getting bollocked by the nation for saying that it was a city that wallowed in "victim status". Liverpool were underdogs and it made me like them.

Standing in the pub, I wasn't sure whether I was allowed to get excited about the game. My friends knew I didn't support a team and I didn't want to look like an idiot, but after Liverpool's second goal, that went out of the window. I shouted at the TV screen, overwhelmed by their incredible comeback. This was fairy tale drama made real, and a British team winning the day. I jumped around after they'd won and then went home and watched it all again on the news, not quite believing what I'd seen. It was utterly exhilarating. Could I be a Liverpool fan?

"Yeah, I'd drop Liverpool if I were you," says Tayler Willson — a lifelong Portsmouth fan who publishes the PO4 Fanzine — when I suggest I might be a Reds fan. "I was born in Portsmouth and have lived here all my life. Despite them being properly shit now, I still support them. You need a reason." This sentiment is echoed by everyone I speak to except Rich Innes, a football writer for the Daily Mirror. He uses stats to debunk myths and commonly held views about players and clubs. I ask him for some advice on choosing a team.

"The ideal answer, if someone's asking, is: my dad's been going since he was a boy. But I've never brought into this idea that you have to have supported a team since birth. My dad's a rugby fan. I got interested in football in the playground at school. Failing that, just be respectful, be aware that you're a newbie."

Given that it would be distinctly bogus for me to use my dad as a way in, I try to think of other personal links I might have. I find myself at

# WHO TO SUPPORT? "THE IDEAL ANSWER IS MY DAD'S BEEN GOING SINCE HE WAS A BOY," SAYS MIRROR WRITER RICH INNES

the Kingfield Stadium, Woking FC's ground, on another Saturday afternoon. This time, despite it being November, it's sunny. Woking have all the ingredients I need for a club. This small commuter town 40 minutes outside of London has had a team since 1889 and it's where I lived for the first 23 years of my life. This was as local as I was going to get. Oh, and they're not exactly a big club, either, so no one could accuse me of picking them on their successes. Woking currently play in the Vanarama Conference, the fifth tier of English football. That said, it is the Football Conference's top division and they're in the running for promotion to The Football League this year.

I can think of only one memory even vaguely Woking FC-related from my childhood. In 1991, when I was seven, Woking beat West Bromwich Albion in a third round FA Cup tie. I remember coaches ferrying Woking fans from their ground up to The Hawthorns to watch the game, 5,000 in total. Coming from a goal down, Woking went on to win 4-2, including a hat-trick from Tim Buzaglo, who at the time worked as an estate agent. It set them up for a fourth round tie with Everton, which they went on to lose 1-0 after a tense match. Right under my nose, then, was a team with history, fighting spirit and modest but real ambition. Perhaps this was where I could finally learn to love football.

"This club is like an extended family to all of us, I think," says Malcolm Jobling, a refuse-van driver who, in his spare time, is Woking's kit manager. With the club since 2002, Malcolm and his colleague Stuart Baverstock (a former Woking FC goalkeeper) are responsible for ensuring that every player has clean kit to wear, including socks, which Jobling often buys out of his own pocket. After a recent away match to Grimsby, he was awake until five in the morning, laundering kit.

"It's a community and we put the work in because we love it. It means a lot, especially as a fan, to know that you can help your team through. If you're singing, it's like having an extra man on the pitch." And does he think there's space for an extra-extra man? "It's never too late to start supporting a team. Never too late," Jobling reassures me. "You can come down here and have a great time. It does depend on how we do today as well. If we win by three or four goals

you'll probably think, 'Oh, this is all right!' but if it's a dull game, you might not be as impressed. Really, though, you've got to come for a few games and give it a chance."

After our chat, I'm given a guided tour of the club by John Moore, the club's press officer. I learn about Geoff Chapple, Woking's fêted former manager, under whom the club had its best run. I hear about the exploits of Giuseppe Sole, their star striker, and about plans for expansion next year. I meet the chairman, the CFO and former players. I'm invited for some pasta bake in the club hospitality room prior to the match, and told that if I want to sing, I should stand behind the away goal for the first half. If I want to hurl abuse, I should make for the stand at the side of the home goal, aptly dubbed Moaner's Corner. "They love a good moan," says Malcolm.

Despite that, everyone I meet is friendly, welcoming and passionate about the club. There are families. friends and well-wishers, while even the club's former physio, now in his seventies and not fancying retirement, runs the bar in the director's box. It's a community. This hadn't really sunk in before, even though nearly everyone I've spoken to has said it: a place like this might mean more to someone than just the results displayed in the paper. If a club is your life, where you socialise, spend your time, effort and money, how they perform is going to mean everything to you. Of course, you're going to be in a bad mood or criticise them when they

don't play well. And obviously you'll be over the moon when they win.

At 3pm, I sat down in the Leslie Gosden Stand, named after the club's former president, and watched as Woking "ground out" a 1-0 victory against Braintree, with a first-half goal that I couldn't really see, causing the 1,600-strong crowd to go briefly wild. From what I could tell, the football was scrappy but entertaining. That being said, it did start to drag late on. But I'd definitely felt something. Not a lot, but something.

"YOU CAN'T ORDER AN AMARETTO AND CRANBERRY AT THIS BAR. FLAT, PRICEY LAGER IT IS THEN"

Not yet, anyway. To say I'm a Woking fan after one game would be a bit flippant. But I'm keeping an eye on them. I've been to see Palace play Spurs, too, and returned to the Emirates to watch Arsenal play Newcastle, where I sat next to an Oxford-educated fashion writer and Gooner. I watched, terrified and impressed in equal measure, as she started swearing like a navvy, despite her team scoring four times. I also saw them draw 1-1 with Man City. Having a friend with a pair of season tickets means I've been able to fill an empty seat for free. As any fan will

tell you, thanks to that new stadium,

be a pricey habit going to matches,

and football go together so well.

You don't even have to go to a pub

to talk about a game, and I wonder

without actually going to grounds

Arsenal's tickets are the most

which is perhaps why Twitter

if I can call myself a supporter

expensive in England. It can

d love to tell vou I was

won over, fell in love

been to every game

since - but I haven't.

with the club and have

all the time?

"Plenty of traditional fans still watch," says John Williams, the sports sociologist, "especially as part of away-match contingents. The sorts of features that defined crowds in the past — raucousness, humour, passion, partisanship, profane language — are around now, but they

are perhaps rationed a little more. Ways of being a fan at the top level

have expanded, too. Only a fraction of elite-club supporters make it into the stadium. Smaller clubs, however, still rely mainly on the local crowd to survive."

I think that's a "yes" of sorts.

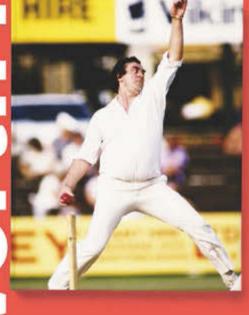
On the Monday after the Woking match, I come into work, sit down and wait. Computers are switched on, people grunt hellos and eventually the ambient office noise rises to that level where people feel comfortable making conversation.

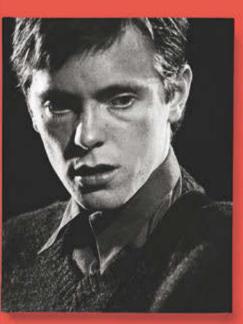
"Get up to much this weekend?" says my neighbour.
"Not much," I reply. "Went to the football on Saturday."
We took it from there.



**Esquire Library** 





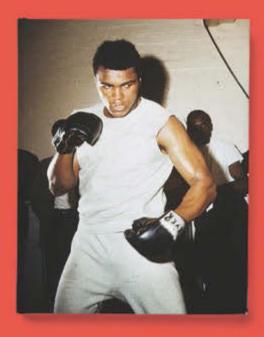






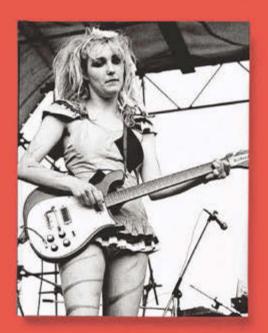






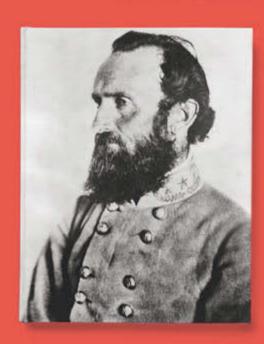






Nothing tells us more about how to be alive now than learning from those who've gone before. And nothing captures their triumphs and disasters better than a book. We invited 25 writers to recommend a biography they love. Here are their picks of 25 lives well lived, 25 lives well told. Read them. Learn from them. Return to them.







#### 0

# How To Live: A Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer

By **Sarah Bakewell** (*Chatto & Windus*, 2010) Recommended by **Nick Hornby** 

Sarah Bakewell's book is a biography with a difference. Like every great life in the arts, Montaigne's is hundreds of years long. He happens to have died in 1592, but his influence is everywhere: in Hamlet's soliloquies, in every newspaper, on every blog. Montaigne, for better or for worse, invented the personal essay — really — and this singular book explores some of the ideas these essays raised, and traces Montaigne's survival from generation to generation. There's a more conventional biography in here, too, but Bakewell manages to thread it into a philosophical self-help book about grief, conviviality, work, originality and a lot of other subjects that Montaigne wanted us to think about. As a consequence, How To Live is original, accessible, thoughtful, useful, and more fun than you'd ever have thought a 16thcentury essayist could be. I'd like to read a similar book about Elvis, or Shakespeare. or Dickens, or Jane Austen; sometimes the true greatness only emerges years, centuries even, after the last breath has been drawn. Funny Girl by Nick Hornby (Viking) is out now

#### 02

## Becoming a Poet: Elizabeth Bishop with Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell

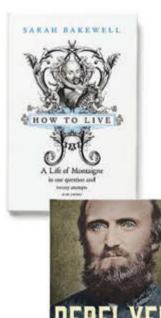
By David Kalstone

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989)

Recommended by Colm Tóibín

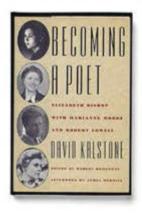
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Becoming a Poet by David Kalstone is the story of the relationship between three poets: Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell and Marianne Moore. Using letters and drafts of poems, he shows how Lowell and Moore did everything they could to influence and help and often patronise Elizabeth Bishop. Moore and her eccentric mother even rewrote one of Bishop's poems for her, just as Lowell made one of Bishop's stories into a poem, and later, without her permission, one of her letters into a sonnet. Kalstone, who died in 1986, three years before the book was published, was a scholar with a light touch, a critic with a real interest in what lay behind poetic influence and inspiration. This book manages to tell the story of three sensibilities, and then shows us Bishop's efforts to float away from her two mentors by writing slowly and meticulously about her childhood in Nova Scotia — some poems took her more than 20 years to complete — and then about Key West, where she lived for a decade, and then later her life in Brazil. Kalstone's style is elegant; he manages to make careful and sober judgements. His book is one of the great biographies. Nora Webster by Colm Tóibín (Viking) is out now





S.C. GWYNNE



#### 03

# Rebel Yell: The Violence, Passion, and Redemption of Stonewall Jackson

By SC Gwynne (Scribner, 2014)

Recommended by Richard Ford

I'm generally bored rigid by the American Civil War. A boyhood in Mississippi will do that to you (or else turn you into a Republican). But SC Gwynne's superb biography of Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson is a revelation — as is Jackson himself. Gwynne is an especially informed and felicitous writer, while Jackson poses a challenge to the most resourceful student of human character. Jackson was a compendium of glaring opposites: a pious and uxorious homebody and failed science teacher, who transformed himself (in an absurd and bad cause) into the fiercest and most ingenious of battlefield generals. His biographer would need somehow, if not to reconcile Jackson's incongruities, at least to get them into shapely sentences. And Gwynne is truly remarkable at this. Don't let the title throw you off: this is a riveting book.

 $\label{lem:constraint} \textbf{Let}\, \textbf{Me}\, \textbf{Be}\, \textbf{Frank}\, \textbf{With}\, \textbf{You}\, \textbf{by}\, \textbf{Richard}\, \textbf{Ford}\, \\ (\textbf{Bloomsbury})\, \textbf{is}\, \textbf{out}\, \textbf{now}$ 

#### 04

#### Elia Kazan: A Life

By **Elia Kazan** (*Knopf*, 1988)

Recommended by John Lahr

Elia Kazan's autobiography is my favourite book on American theatre. Kazan was a dynamo. Scratch anywhere in modern American theatre and you'll find him. As an actor, he shouted "Strike, Strike, Strike!" in Clifford Odets's Waiting for Lefty, the polemical anthem, which launched Odets and The Group Theatre into stardom in the Thirties. As a director, his psychological insight and sense of narrative structure helped to shape the most important mid-century plays: Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman; Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth, Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. As if that weren't enough, he co-founded The Actors Studio, which revolutionised acting, and was the first co-artistic director of Lincoln Centre. All the forces in US theatre come together, one way or another, in him. At the centre of this furious energy and appetite for life was a combative outsider's rage. His memoir is unique for its honesty, intimacy and insight into all the great talents with whom he worked, and into his own legendary struggle to be an artist and to be true to his political principles. The scope of his influence, the complexity of his personality and his psychological acumen place this memoir in a class by itself. Nobody in 20th-century theatre had Kazan's career, and no memoirist has left a more unabashed witness to the brilliance and barbarity of American individualism. Tennessee Williams: Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh by John Lahr (Bloomsbury) is out now

#### 05

#### The Life of Samuel Johnson

By **James Boswell** (Charles Dilly, 1791) Recommended by Adam Gopnik

When it comes to biographies, I always return, in a shamelessly unimaginative spirit, to James Boswell's The Life of Samuel Johnson. The most unoriginal of choices, this dramatic biography of the life of a miscellaneous journalist remains the most original of books: in many ways the most original (and still inimitable) book in all the English language. Instead of the slow-crawl, dutiful chronicling of the life of a great man, piety after piety and year after year, it is a collection of hyper-dramatised vignettes, sometimes comic - "I asked Dr Johnson whether he thought anv man of a modern age could have written such poems? Johnson replied, 'Yes, sir, many men, many women, and many children"; sometimes passionate, "'I am afraid I may be one of those who shall be damned' (looking dismally). Dr Adams: 'What do you mean by damned?' Johnson: (passionately and loudly) 'Sent to  $hell, sir, and \, punished \, everlastingly "-but$ always utterly alive. I've been reading it every night for 30-plus years, and never get even slightly bored, though I've sometimes wondered why Boswell's dramatic technique remains so rarely imitated, even in biographies written by intimates of their subjects.

Winter by Adam Gopnik (Quercus) is out now

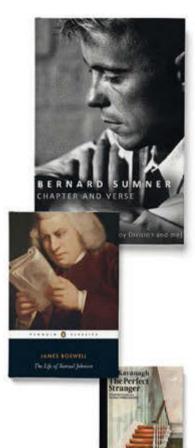
#### 06 -

#### Wilfred Owen

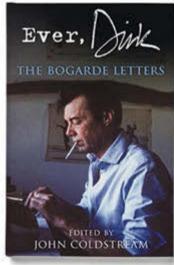
By Dominic Hibberd (Orion, 2002) Recommended by Philip Hoare

In 2014, we were bombarded with more books about World War I than bombs fell in the trenches. So I dug out Hibberd's brilliant Wilfred Owen. Building on Jon Stallworthy's wonderful first biography from 1974 (sadly, Stallworthy died last year), Hibberd brings a startling, if not counterfactual, new focus to bear on our most celebrated war poet. In 1914, Owen was a perfume salesman in Bordeaux, sporting a floppy fringe and hanging out with Decadent anarchist poets. When he did enlist, the next year, it was not to fight for his country, but for poetry. Hibberd's biography is the first to deal openly with Owen's sexuality. He shows the power of Owen's poems lies in his passion for the men under his command. Like many of my generation, Owen's was the authentic voice of protest. Indeed, his poems only became widely popular in the Sixties, when they were evoked in opposition to Vietnam. Until Jane Potter's much-anticipated edition of Owen's letters later this year, the anniversary of The Great War will have not produced any account so compelling as Owen's verse, or as revealing as Hibberd's prose.

The Sea Inside by Philip Hoare (Fourth Estate) is out now







### **Chapter and Verse**

By Bernard Sumner (Bantam, 2014) Recommended by Irvine Welsh

A biography should be able to spring surprises, even if you know the subject. Bernard Sumner's autobiography contains poignantly rendered family tragedies, told with warm humour and without self-pity, that the wider world and even close friends were previously unaware of. As well as showing a life saved and made by rock'n'roll, it illustrates somebody almost effortlessly negotiating the rapids of success and stardom, armed only with street smarts and laconic Manc wit. The passage on a bitter council co-worker's view on weight gain alone makes it essential. A must for Joy Division and New Order fans. A Decent Ride by Irvine Welsh (Cape) is out on 16 April

#### 08 -

#### The Perfect Stranger

By PJ Kavanagh (Chatto & Windus, 1966) Recommended by **David Nicholls** 

I've read some wonderful memoirs, from Blake Morrison's And When Did You Last See Your Father? to, more recently, Damian Barr's frank and touching Maggie and Me. But to choose one, I'd go for The Perfect Stranger. It's a coming-ofage story following the young writer's adventures from a Butlin's camp to Paris, Korea, Barcelona and Oxford, where he meets the "perfect stranger" of the title. Funny, poetical, ultimately heartbreaking, it's a lost classic, out of print for years but due for republication soon. Us by David Nicholls (Hodder) is out now

#### 09 -

#### Ever, Dirk: The Bogarde Letters

Edited by John Coldstream (W&N, 2008) Recommended by David Thomson

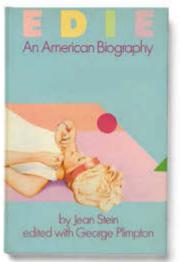
This is a life as told through the letters of Dirk Bogarde: a great actor, a fair writer of novels and memoirs, a man with a natural talent for gardens and houses and a seething enthusiasm for gossip and friendship. He was gay (but not inclined to admit it), yet some of his most stimulating friendships were with women he adored. As edited (superbly) by John Coldstream, you get the sound of his voice, the pleasure of having him as your host and the fascination of witty, personal letters hideously misspelled! Yet through all the gaiety and humour, you perceive someone always acting, and trying to hide a chill and a loneliness that emerge in real biographies of him. Instead, he wanted to be good company and "Ever, Dirk". What more do you expect from a biography than a sense of the act he was putting on? I'm not sure honesty makes for good biography or great actors. Why Acting Matters by David Thomson (Yale) is out on 23 April

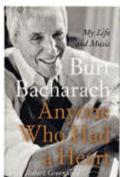
#### Edie: An American Biography

By **Jean Stein** (Cape, 1982)

Recommended by Andrew O'Hagan

I find it hard to choose my favourite biography as I love so many. It could easily be Boswell's The Life of Samuel Johnson, a deathless book filled with drama and comedy (a classic because it makes you realise what the art of biography means). Or Richard Ellmann's biography of Oscar Wilde, Fred Laurence Guiles' of Marilyn Monroe, Hilary Spurling's two volumes on Matisse, or Miranda Carter's on the lives of Anthony Blunt? Whatever it is that makes a great biography, the element is in short supply. Yet the biography I've chosen differs from most; it's more edited than authored, and is about a quite marginal person. Edie by Jean Stein is the story of Andy Warhol's associate Edie Sedgwick as told by those who knew her. She was a pretty, young socialite who made a splash in the underground art scene before dying of a drug overdose at 28. It might not sound much of a life, but great biographies are often a record of a period as much as a person, and Stein's book is brilliant about the Sixties. It also cuts to the core of what we now understand to be a general obsession with celebrity. This book is what is called "oral biography": the story is told through hundreds of interviews and is orchestrated with terrific brio. The Illuminations by Andrew O'Hagan (Faber) is out on 5 February





#### music, but he's also a highly entertaining, and surprisingly candid, raconteur. Bacharach, the epitome of cool, an urbane ladykiller as smooth as his orchestral arrangements, plied his trade in a world of self-destructive singers, greedy agents, broads, highballs and dinners in Italian joints "where Sinatra liked to hang out". This book shows the craft of the songwriter, Bacharach's odd relationship with his lyricist Hal David, and the hurly-burly of life in New York's Brill Building (the hit factory of Sixties American pop). It spares nothing of an energetic love life with such walk-on players as Slim

Brandy, who danced at the Sands Hotel in Vegas,

notes laconically, "wound up with some low-level hood, who killed her on a boat." Bacharach floats

and Tracy Fisher, a showgirl, who Bacharach

"I Say A Little Prayer", "Walk on By", "The Look

of Love", "This Guy's in Love With You" — Burt

Bacharach has written and produced some of the

most memorable and romantic songs in post-war

Anvone Who Had a Heart: My Life

By Burt Bacharach with Robert

Greenfield (Atlantic, 2013)

Recommended by Mick Brown

and Music

Tearing Down the Wall of Sound: The Rise and Fall of Phil Spector by Mick Brown (Bloomsbury) isoutnow

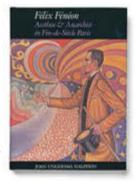
across the pages, radiating charm as seemingly

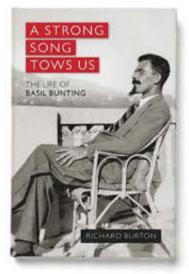
effortless as his melodies.

#### A Strong Song Tows Us: The Life of **Basil Bunting**

By Richard Burton (Infinite Ideas, 2013) Recommended by lain Sinclair

A culture, at any given time, can be judged by its poets. And the way those poets are appreciated or ignored. In the ground beside a Quaker Meeting House, near Sedbergh, is the plain stone memorial to Northumbrian poet Basil Bunting. Bunting did not look for a biography. He kept predatory academics and gossipmongers at arm's length. He burnt letters. The story, in so far as he wanted to tell it, was a single poem, Briggflatts: the myth of self as a memory-song or river echo."Descant on Rawthey's madrigal." But we want the mystery unpacked and explained. Burton has been diligent. Bunting in prison as a conscientious objector during World War I. Carousing with Hemingway in Paris. Hanging out with Ezra Pound in Rapallo. Diplomat and spy in Persia. Rescued from newspaper drudgery by young Tom Pickard. Fêted by Allen Ginsberg. A man acclaimed, then re-forgotten. Here is a life covering most of the 20th century. It comes back in the end, to the sound heard in Briggflatts: the mason's mallet spelling a name for a gravestone. London Overground: A Day's Walk Around the Ginger Line by Iain Sinclair (Hamish Hamilton) is out on 4 June





#### 13 -Félix Fénéon: Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris

By Joan Ungersma Halperin (Yale, 1989) Recommended by Tom McCarthy

An extraordinary book (taking 25 years to write) of an extraordinary life. Félix Fénéon was an elegant man-about-the-boulevards; an art critic who championed the Post-Impressionists when the Academy thought them irrelevant; a literary magazine editor; and an anarchist who planted bombs in restaurants full of politicians. On trial for acts of which he was evidently guilty,  $he\, charmed\, his\, way\, off\, the\, hook\, (\text{``It\, is\, alleged}$ I was seen talking with the German terrorist Kampfmeyer 'behind a lamppost?' But a lamppost is round..."). Here is the outline of his "psychological novel" The Muzzled Woman. "First Part: Uh! Second Part: Two purplish butterflies alight on Jacqueline's zygomatic muscle. Third Part: Paul's Sa's bed. Fourth Part: The menacing eye of the lewd druggist." Did he write it? No. Who needs to when the outline is that good? He pioneered the three-line newshaiku, or fait divers: "It was his turn at nine-pins when a cerebral haemorrhage felled M André, 75, of Levallois. While his ball was rolling, he ceased to be."

Satin Island by Tom McCarthy (Vintage) is out on 12 March

#### 14

#### The Years of Lyndon Johnson

By **Robert A Caro** (*Knopf*, 1982-2012) Recommended by **Mark Lawson** 

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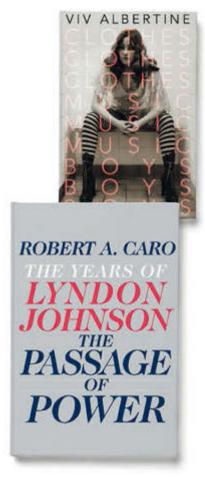
Most biographers devote a short part of their own life to a long stretch of somebody else's, but Robert A Caro has achieved more than a 1:1 ratio. President Lyndon Baines Johnson had a 32-year political career, culminating in the White House after JFK's assassination; and Caro has so far spent four decades describing that CV. Starting work shortly after LBJ's death in 1973, he published the first volume, The Path to Power, in 1982 and three more have appeared at intervals of roughly a decade, with the concluding fifth book (presidency and postpresidency) currently underway. The cumulative result is the greatest work ever written about the motives, tactics and consequences of elective power. Anyone contemplating taking a position from tennis club treasurer to mayor of London should read the third book, Master of the Senate, a riveting account of beguiling rivals and opponents to do what you want. And, although there had been thousands of accounts of the Kennedy assassination by the time that Caro published The Passage of Power in 2012, his version, told from the viewpoint of Johnson on the floor of the following car, is the most intense and affecting. Caro never denies the vulgarity and corruption that were a part of LBJ but also shows that he did more to shape US society than JFK had. The Deaths by Mark Lawson (Picador) is out now

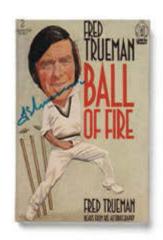
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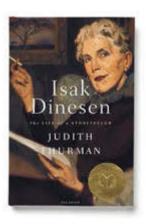
#### Isak Dinesen: The Life of a Storyteller

By **Judith Thurman** (St Martins, 1995) Recommended by **Adam Thirlwell** 

So often I'm distrustful of biography as a form, and especially the biographies of writers - all those novels reduced to psychosomatic neuroses! But I love Judith Thurman's of Isak Dinesen. Now, I understand, Dinesen is not - not any more - the most famous of names. She was the author of the memoir Out of Africa, and a sequence of gothic tales that's unlike any other 20th-century fiction. But then, Dinesen was unlike any other author. She was born into the Danish aristocracy. Her real name was Karen Dinesen; she published fiction in English as Isak Dinesen, then in Danish as Karen Blixen, the name on her tombstone. But she was known in Denmark simply as Baronessen (the Baroness). And you need to read this biography not only for the outré details — like the dinner she once had with Carson McCullers, Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe (Monroe, she said, reminded her of a lion cub) - but for the elegance of Thurman's composition, which transforms a life into a patterned process. And that, amigos, is what biography should be. Lurid and Cute by Adam Thirlwell (Cape) is out now







#### 16

#### Clothes Clothes Clothes Music Music Boys Boys Boys

By **Viv Albertine** (*Faber*, 2014) Recommended by **Mark Ellen** 

The most gripping and evocative rock memoir I've ever read. It opens like a black and white movie about a broken-home childhood in the late-Fifties, becomes a Grimm's Fairy Tale of outrageous teenage adventure, then a punk pantomime with her game-changing, all-girl band The Slits, then a brutally honest attempt to make sense of marriage, motherhood and middle age — with clothes, music and boys the three irresistible forces that steer her path and fire her imagination. Every split-second is so vivid and powerfully observed: the less than fragrant sex (Pistols, Mick Jones, Johnny Thunders), the head-warping drug episodes, the emotional highs and menstrual miseries of being a girl in a ballet dress playing electric guitar. Here's a taste, Viv has run away with a friend to Amsterdam and is about to spend the night with a junkie (it's 1970, she's 15): "Out of the gloom, a double mattress begins to materialise and, lounging on it, languishing behind a veil of smoke from a joint like the caterpillar in Alice In Wonderland, is an angelic boy with long golden ringlets. He looks us over and smiles." That's nothing: wait till she's on tour with The Clash...

Rock Stars Stole My Life!: A Big Bad Love Affair With Music by Mark Ellen (Coronet Books) is out in paperback on 8 May

### Ball of Fire

By **Fred Trueman** (*JM Dent & Sons*, 1976) Recommended by **Richard Benson** 

For a sport that prides itself on its chivalry, fair play and liking for cucumber sandwiches, cricket produces a lot of autobiographies with dodgy exposés and anger-management issues. Ball of Fire is the snorty king of them all, a spectacular venting of arrogance, resentment, and Yorkshire chippiness. Trueman was arguably England's greatest-ever fast bowler,  $controversial\, and\, aggressive.\, He\, later\, enjoyed$ a successful TV career as presenter and pundit. Ball of Fire features great anecdotes from his cricketing days, several blood-soaked, since this was a man who settled scores by breaking opponents' jaws with bouncers. But it's the drama (sample chapter titles: "The Curse of the Truemans", "The White English Bastard", "I Could Have Been Skipper!") and furious showing off ("I bowled faster over a longer period than anyone else on Earth"; "some of those old-timers talked a load of old cock!") that make it. Like a mix of Morrissey and Roy Keane, it's the antidote to bland sports biographies. The Valley: A Hundred Years in the Life of a Family (Bloomsbury) by Richard Benson is out now

#### James Joyce

By **Richard Ellmann** (*Oxford*, 1959) Recommended by **Kevin Maher** 

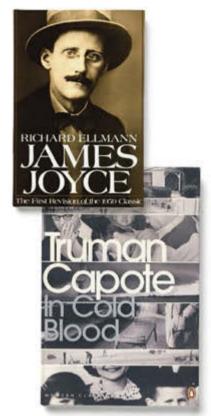
More than 800 pages of clear-cut analysis and no-nonsense insight, this is the book for anyone who's made it as far as the third chapter of James Joyce's Ulysses, glared at the opening words, "Ineluctable modality of the visible.", and thought, "You know what? Fuck this!" Because Ellmann's biography of Joyce is not just a ten-years-in-the-making masterwork, described by Anthony Burgess as "the greatest literary biography of the 20th century." It is also the great calmative that approaches the work of Joyce without pretension, and makes it entirely comprehensible by simply rooting it back into the life of an affable Irish overachiever who once boasted of Ulysses, "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries." Highlights include a high-stakes 1902 face-off between Joyce and the much older (and more famous) WB Yeats in a Dublin café (think Michael Mann's Heat, but with extra rhetorical flourishes) in which the younger man dismisses his elder as a pompous relic. Or the many wildly intimate letters sent between Joyce and eventual wife Nora Barnacle in which the writer expresses his desire to, in so many words, let her pee-pee and poo-poo all over him. But mostly, Ellmann gives a gorgeous portrait of an artist determined to transform his life into literature. And by documenting that life in dense, breathtaking detail, Ellmann brings the literature alive and, thankfully, finally, takes the enigmas and the puzzles to pieces. Last Night on Earth by Kevin Maher (Little, Brown) is out on 2 April

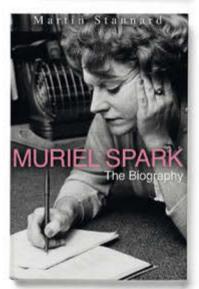
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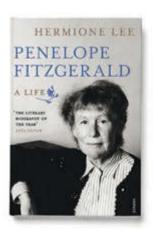
#### Penelope Fitzgerald

By **Hermione Lee** (Chatto & Windus, 2013) Recommended by **Alan Hollinghurst** 

Penelope Fitzgerald presents a special problem for a biographer. Known now as one of the finest English novelists of the Seventies and Eighties, she didn't publish her first book until she was 59, and her last and greatest, The Blue Flower, when she was nearly 80. For much of her long, difficult life, she was a genius in waiting, and in her famous old age became something of a tease about her own history. She wrote glancingly about her marriage and career in the novels she produced at first at the rate of one a year; all fans of her fiction will have longed to know more. In Hermione Lee she has found the supreme biographer, not only tirelessly interested in every detail of Fitzgerald's life, but with  $a\,profound\,sense\,of\,the\,imaginative\,compulsions$ which produced her utterly original novels. This is a masterpiece worthy of its subject. The Stranger's Child by Alan Hollinghurst (Picador) is out now







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#### In Cold Blood

By **Truman Capote** (*Random House*, 1966) Recommended by **David Vann** 

I've written a portrait of a school shooter — mass murderer Steve Kazmierczak - so I'm biased but In Cold Blood is the biography I remember most. It was in some ways a life-destroying act of empathy, and maybe that's what biography demands: the erasure of the author. I will never write about another murderer. He's become a part of my life, made my view of America and of men much darker, and if I could go back, I would not have written the book. I wasn't very good at it. Ibecame impatient, wanted him out of my life, and finished the book quickly after writing the initial article for US Esquire. But Capote remained immersed in that dark place for years. He went beyond any safety. And because of that, we can find in his book a part of our humanity, a recognition. This is rare. In Dave Cullen's book Columbine, by contrast, we have the great lie of US heroes overshadowing any willingness to look at ourselves. He spent 10 years, but all wasted. Aquarium by David Vann (William Heinemann) is out on 5 March

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#### Muriel Spark: The Biography

By **Martin Stannard** (W&N, 2009) Recommended by **Joseph O'Neill** 

I recommend reading Muriel Spark and then Muriel Spark by Martin Stannard. Spark was an extraordinary novelist, and her life was extraordinary, too. Born into a Scottish-Jewish lower-middle-class family, at a young age she found herself living in Southern Rhodesia with a mentally ill husband. She fled, leaving a toddler son behind, and arrived in London at the height of WWII. Somehow she made a living; climbed into male-dominated literary London; switched, in her late thirties, from writing poetry to writing prose; and over the course of the next decade produced at least four deathless novels. Spark is not a figure one warms to. She was a pretty heartless mother and daughter, and her self-privileging knew practically no bounds. Family and romantic ties were unbearable burdens, and she found almost intolerable any long-lasting relationship that did not involve the subordination by her of the other person, who had to function as her helper or supporter or be otherwise utile. On top of it all, she was a devout Roman Catholic and possessed of an infuriating sense of spiritual superiority. And yet she was wonderfully good as a writer, and in Martin Stannard found a biographer steadfast in his sympathy and perceptiveness. Spark died before Stannard had finished his book, and he had every opportunity to turn on her, just as Spark turned on almost everyone she knew. But he didn't.

The Dog by Joseph O'Neill (Fourth Estate) is out now

#### King of the World: Muhammad Ali and the Rise of an American Hero

By David Remnick (Picador, 1999)

Recommended by Tim Lewis

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For assorted reasons, I have read more biographies of sports personalities than any man should and this is the best. King of the World is that rare combination of a great writer with a worthy subject: Ali, the self-styed "Greatest", with Remnick, the Pulitzer Prize-winning editor of The New Yorker. Ali's life had already been exhaustively chronicled by the time Remnick got round to it in the mid-Nineties — seemingly unimprovably by Norman Mailer in The Fight - but where this account truly soars is the forensic historical, racial and social context it offers. At the heart of Remnick's tale is the 1964 contest between Ali — Cassius Clay, as he then was — and Sonny Liston, or "a matchup between a Muslim punk and a terrifying thug". America didn't like Liston, the champ, but they were even more suspicious of Clay, the charismatic pretender. The fight is a crucial moment in the "invention" of Muhammad Ali, the changing of a country, and Remnick's writing is so absorbing

Land of Second Chances: The Impossible Rise of Rwanda's Cycling Team by Tim Lewis (Yellow Jersey) is out now

blood in their pee the next morning.

and visceral that a reader almost expects to find



By Mark Thompson (Cornell, 2013) Recommended by Aleksandar Hemon

I seldom read writer's biographies; no patience for speculative analysis that can reduce someone's work to a consequence of, say, Father's alcoholic neglect and Mother's not-so-latent homosexuality (or is it the other way around?). But this deals with my favourite and one of the last century's greatest writers. I like my writers complicated, and no one is more so than Danilo Kiš; child of a Jewish father (killed in Auschwitz) and a Montenegrin mother, he lived through the worst of the 20th century, even if missing its horrid coda — the dissolution of Yugoslavia — by dint of dying in 1989. Thompson builds his story by taking Kiš's early biographical note (entitled "Birth Certificate") as its floor plan. He tracks the evolution of his ethics and aesthetics, which, for many an Eastern European writer of my generation, provided guidance in weathering variable cataclysms. Kiš wrote his great works: A Tomb for Boris Davidovich; Garden, Ashes; Encyclopedia of the Dead, as if there was something at stake in literature because there is. Thompson understands where Kiš comes from, geographically, aesthetically, ethically, having done research and interviews. He writes passionately, driven by a desire to be with Kiš, to keep him around. And he is, even if vou can't see him.

The Book of My Lives by Aleksandar Hemon (Picador) is out now



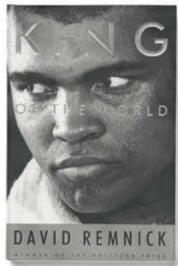
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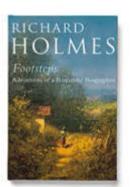
#### Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer

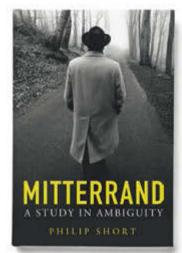
By Richard Holmes (Hodder, 1985) Recommended by Adam Begley

OK, it's not a biography, but if it's biography you're after, this is the book to read. Holmes has written some of the best literary lives of our time, including a massive Shelley and a two-volume Coleridge. In Footsteps, a blend of memoir, travelogue and biographical investigation, he shows you how. We first meet him on the trail of Robert Louis Stevenson, retracing on foot a 12-day pilgrimage through central France. He then pops up in Paris in May 1968, hot on the heels of Mary Wollstonecraft, who was in town for The Terror in 1794. In Italy, Holmes zig-zags after Shelley, his wife Mary (Wollstonecraft's daughter), and her stepsister, Claire Clairmont, a scandalous ménage well worth tailing. Back in Paris in the mid-Seventies, he walks alongside the doomed 19th-century poet Gérard de Nerval, famous for strolling in the Palais-Royal gardens with a live lobster on a blue silk leash. How deeply does Holmes immerse himself? "I mark my beginning as a professional biographer from the day my bank bounced a cheque because it was inadvertently dated 1772." Updike by Adam Begley (Harper) is out now









#### Mitterrand: A Study in Ambiguity

By Philip Short (Bodley Head, 2013) Recommended by Patrick French

Philip Short's chilling biography of Chairman Mao led me to Mitterrand: A Study in Ambiguity, a work of psychological, political and historical acuity. President of France from 1981 to 1995, Mitterand worked in shades of grey and was never less than ambivalent. He managed to be a wartime resistance leader who worked with collaborators; an agnostic who believed in prayer; a manipulator who viewed everything and everyone "as both itself and its opposite"; a man who ran two families and other lovers; an ideological chameleon who changed French society. François Mitterrand always lived on a grand scale. This biography by Short has some lovely, subtle perceptions of Mitterrand's diplomatic strategy and interaction with other leaders. When the first President Bush said to him after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, "We don't know who the enemy is any more," Mitterrand replied smoothly, "Yes, it's a nuisance not having an enemy." He took his own philosophy from a 17th-century Italian cardinal, Mazarin: "Simulate; dissimulate; trust nobody; speak well of everyone; anticipate before you act."

India: A Portrait by Patrick French (Penguin) is out now !!



Pink cotton trench coat, £910; white/multicoloured floral-print cotton jogging trousers, £405; yellow/ grey leather/nylon trainers, £350, all by Etro



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NEIL GAVIN

FASHION BY OLIE ARNOLD





# Dolce & Gabbana

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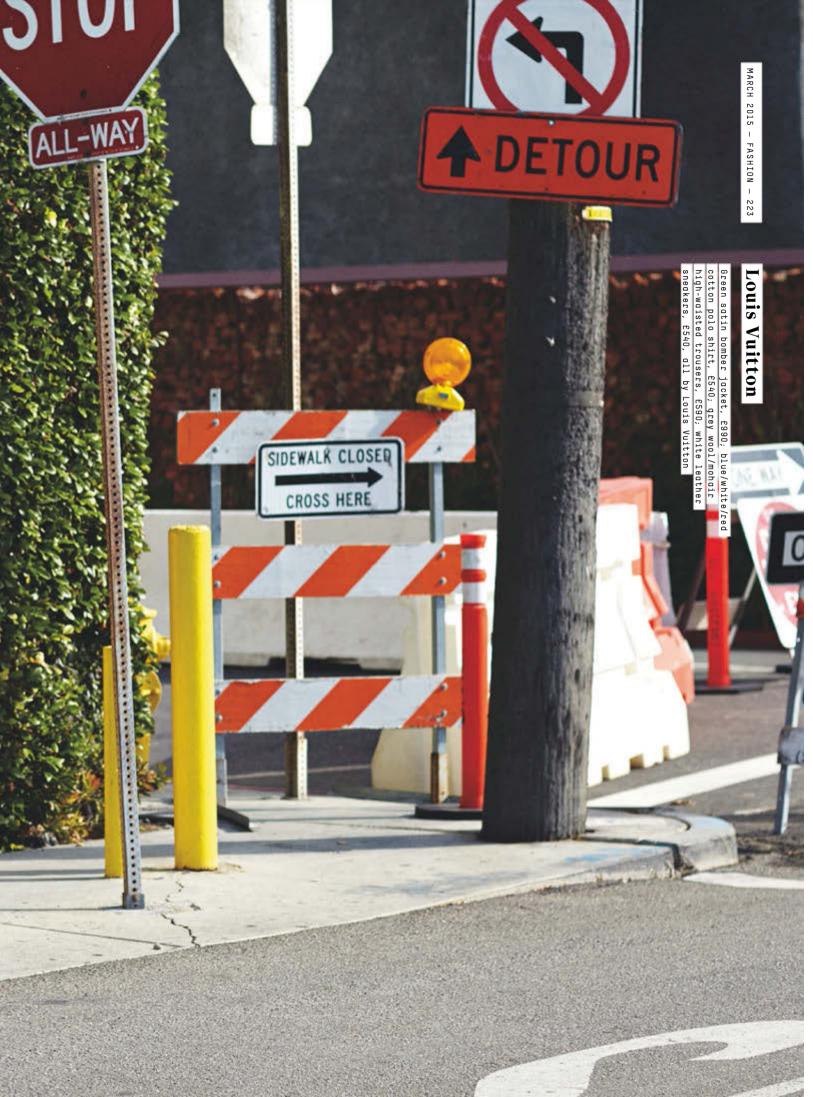
# Ermenegildo Zegna Couture

Black/silver silk technical jacket, £1,200; black cotton vest, £600; gray cotton vest, £ pure silk technical bouclé shorts, £890, all by Ermenegildo Zegna Couture

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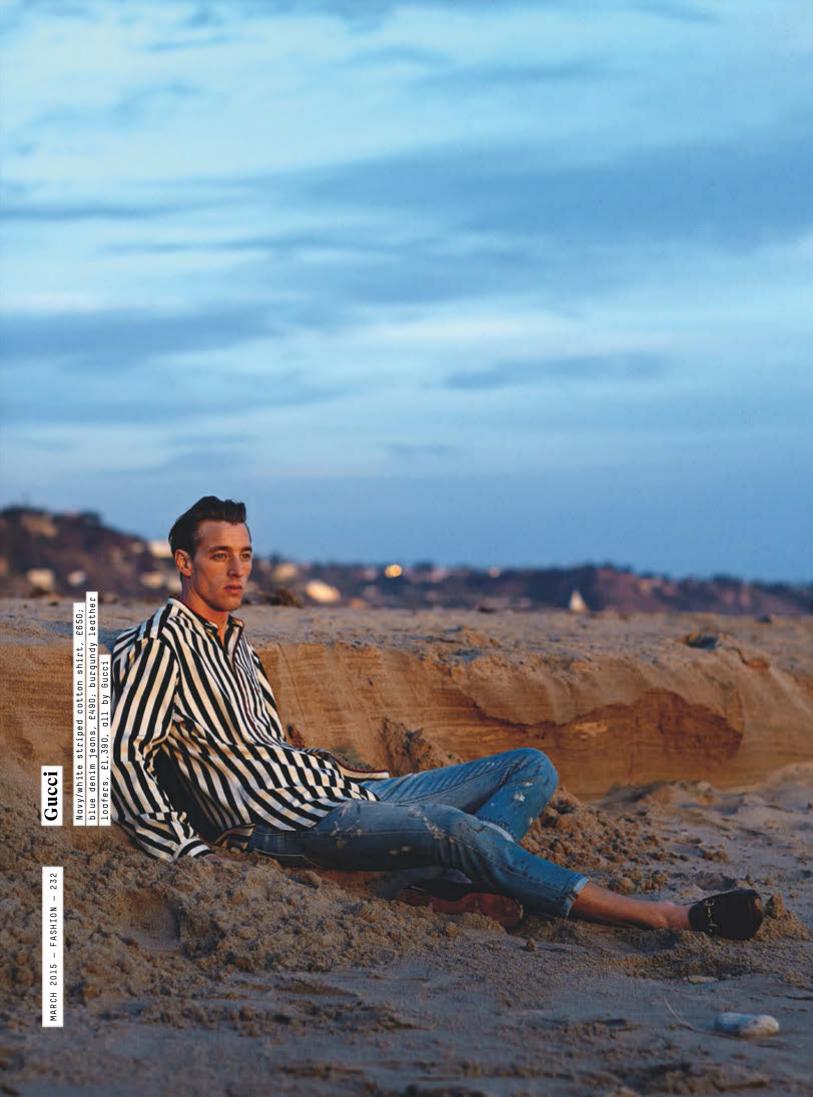
Pale pink cotton bomber jacket, E625; grey/multicoloured floral-print silk short-sleeved shirt, E450; white cotton pleated shorts, E295, all by Dunhill







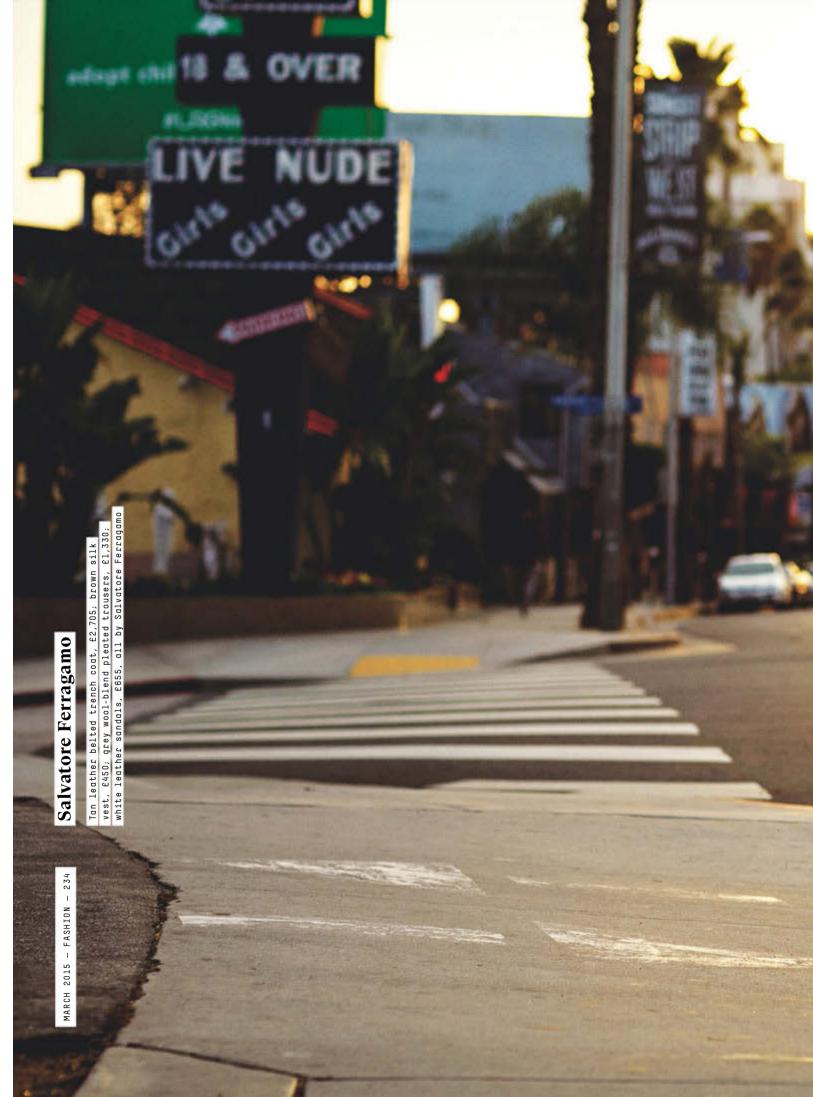




## Polo Ralph Lauren

Brown leather jacket, £1,295; beacon-print cotton-blend shawl sweater, £1,040; blue cotton striped shirt, £125; grey cotton/fleece hooded sweatshirt, £115; amber cotton hunting trousers, £125; indigo cotton print bandana, £60; beacon-print nylon/suede backpack, £430, all by Polo Ralph Lauren



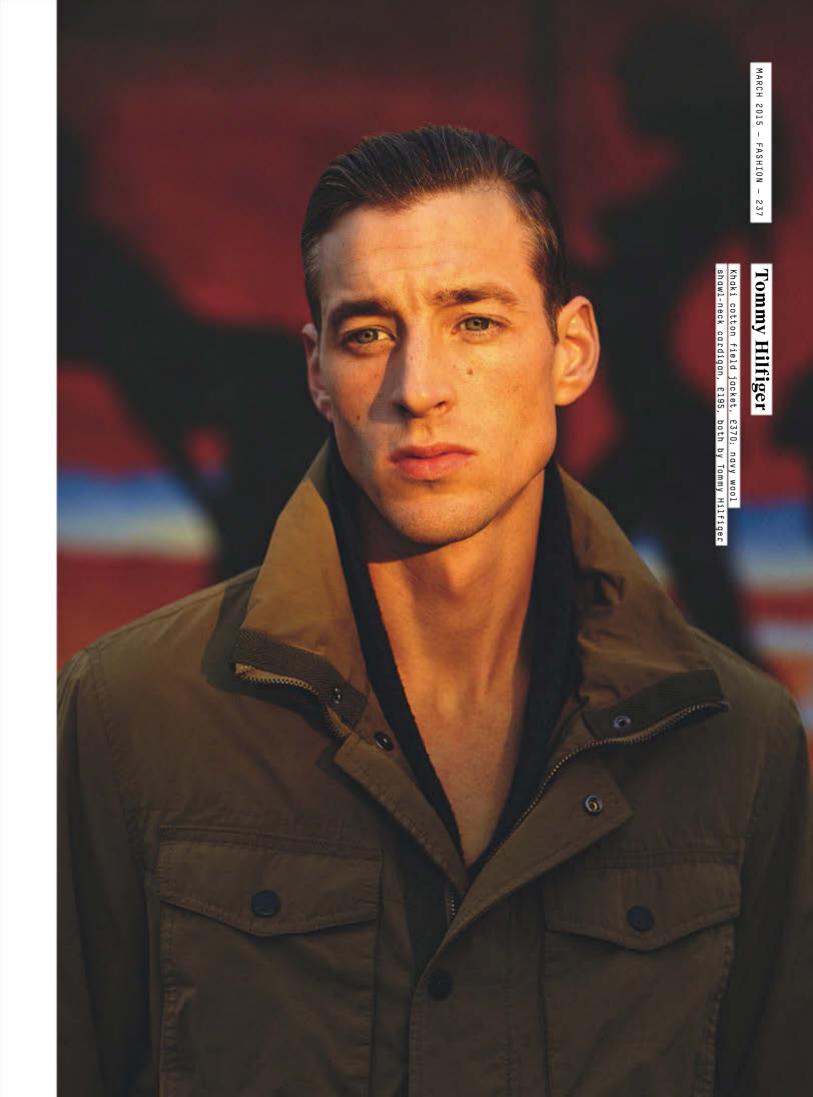




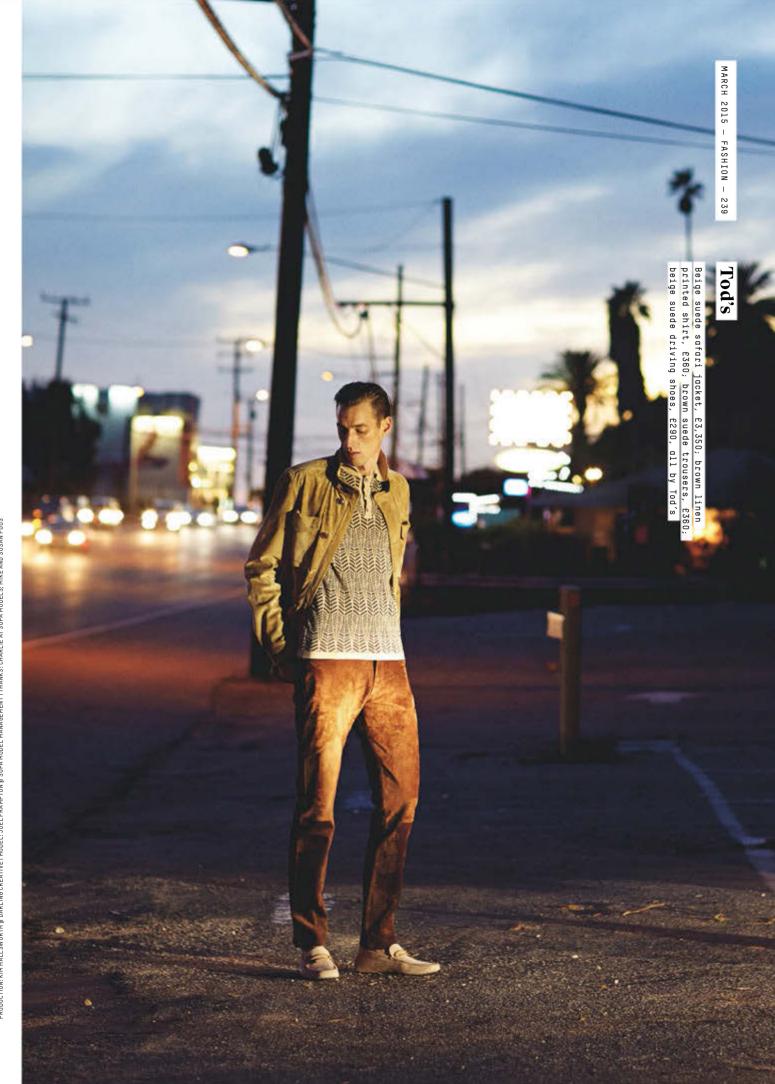
## **Giorgio Armani**

Midnight blue nappa leather jacket, £2,165, white/blue checked cotton shirt, £485, blue satin double-pleated trousers, £570, blue calf-leather belt, £265, navy leather derby shoes, £530, all by Giorgio Armani













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